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THE COMPLETE WRITINGS OF
GUY DE MAUPASSANT
STORIES OF THE TRAGEDY & COMEDY OF LIFE
UNIVERSITY EDITION
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SHORT STORIES

OF THE

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF LIFE

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

WITH A CRITICAL PREFACE BY

PAUL BOURGET

OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY

ROBERT ARNOT, M.A.

VOL. I

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GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Of the French writers of romance of the latter part of the nineteenth century no one made a reputation as quickly as did Guy de Maupassant. Not one has preserved that reputation with more ease, not only during life, but in death. None so completely hides his personality in his glory. In an epoch of the utmost publicity, in which the most insignificant deeds of a celebrated man are spied, recorded, and commented on, the author of "Boule de Suif," of "Pierre et Jean," of "Notre Cœur," found a way of effacing his personality in his work.

Of De Maupassant we know that he was born in Normandy about 1850; that he was the favorite pupil, if one may so express it, the literary *protégé*, of Gustave Flaubert; that he made his *début* late in 1880, with a novel inserted in a small collection, published by Emile Zola and his young friends, under the title: "The Soirées of Medan"; that subsequently he did not fail to publish stories and romances every year up to 1891, when a disease of the brain struck him down in the fullness of production; and that he died, finally, in 1893, without having recovered his reason.

We know, too, that he passionately loved a strenuous physical life and long journeys, particularly long

journeys upon the sea. He owned a little sailing yacht, named after one of his books, "Bel-Ami," in which he used to sojourn for weeks and months. These meager details are almost the only ones that have been gathered as food for the curiosity of the public.

I leave the legendary side, which is always in evidence in the case of a celebrated man,—that gossip, for example, which avers that Maupassant was a high liver and a worldling. The very number of his volumes is a protest to the contrary. One could not write so large a number of pages in so small a number of years without the virtue of industry, a virtue incompatible with habits of dissipation. This does not mean that the writer of these great romances had no love for pleasure and had not tasted the world, but that for him these were secondary things. The psychology of his work ought, then, to find an interpretation other than that afforded by wholly false or exaggerated anecdotes. I wish to indicate here how this work, illumined by the three or four positive data which I have given, appears to me to demand it.

And first, what does that anxiety to conceal his personality prove, carried as it was to such an extreme degree? The answer rises spontaneously in the minds of those who have studied closely the history of literature. The absolute silence about himself, preserved by one whose position among us was that of a Tourgenief, or of a Mérimée, and of a Molière or a Shakespeare among the classic great, reveals, to a person of instinct, a nervous sensibility of extreme depth. There are many chances for an artist of his

kind, however timid, or for one who has some grief, to show the depth of his emotion. To take up again only two of the names just cited, this was the case with the author of "Terres Vierges," and with the writer of "Colomba."

A somewhat minute analysis of the novels and romances of Maupassant would suffice to demonstrate, even if we did not know the nature of the incidents which prompted them, that he also suffered from an excess of nervous emotionalism. Nine times out of ten, what is the subject of these stories to which freedom of style gives the appearance of health? A tragic episode. I cite, at random, "Mademoiselle Fifi," "La Petite Roque," "Inutile Beauté," "Le Masque," "Le Horla," "L'Epreuve," "Le Champ d'Oliviers," among the novels, and among the romances, "Une Vie," "Pierre et Jean," "Fort comme la Mort," "Notre Cœur." His imagination aims to represent the human being as imprisoned in a situation at once insupportable and inevitable. The spell of this grief and trouble exerts such a power upon the writer that he ends stories commenced in pleasantry with some sinister drama. Let me instance "Saint-Antonin," "A Midnight Revel," "The Little Cask," and "Old Amable." You close the book at the end of these vigorous sketches, and feel how surely they point to constant suffering on the part of him who executed them.

This is the leading trait in the literary physiognomy of Maupassant, as it is the leading and most profound trait in the psychology of his work, viz, that human life is a snare laid by nature, where joy is always changed to misery, where noble words and

the highest professions of faith serve the lowest plans and the most cruel egoism, where chagrin, crime, and folly are forever on hand to pursue implacably our hopes, nullify our virtues, and annihilate our wisdom. But this is not the whole.

Maupassant has been called a literary nihilist — but (and this is the second trait of his singular genius) in him nihilism finds itself coexistent with an animal energy so fresh and so intense that for a long time it deceives the closest observer. In an eloquent discourse, pronounced over his premature grave, Emile Zola well defined this illusion: "We congratulated him," said he, "upon that health which seemed unbreakable, and justly credited him with the soundest constitution of our band, as well as with the clearest mind and the sanest reason. It was then that this frightful thunderbolt destroyed him."

It is not exact to say that the lofty genius of De Maupassant was that of an absolutely sane man. We comprehend it to-day, and, on re-reading him, we find traces everywhere of his final malady. But it *is* exact to say that this wounded genius was, by a singular circumstance, the genius of a robust man. A physiologist would without doubt explain this anomaly by the coexistence of a nervous lesion, light at first, with a muscular, athletic temperament. Whatever the cause, the effect is undeniable. The skilled and dainty pessimism of De Maupassant was accompanied by a vigor and physique very unusual. His sensations are in turn those of a hunter and of a sailor, who have, as the old French saying expressively puts it, "swift foot, eagle eye," and who are attuned to all the whisperings of nature.

The only confidences that he has ever permitted his pen to tell of the intoxication of a free, animal existence are in the opening pages of the story entitled "Mouche," where he recalls, among the sweetest memories of his youth, his rollicking canoe parties upon the Seine, and in the description in "La Vie Errante" of a night spent on the sea,—"to be alone upon the water under the sky, through a warm night,"— in which he speaks of the happiness of those "who receive sensations through the whole surface of their flesh, as they do through their eyes, their mouth, their ears, and sense of smell."

His unique and too scanty collection of verses, written in early youth, contains the two most fearless, I was going to say the most ingenuous, pæans, perhaps, that have been written since the Renaissance: "At the Water's Edge" (Au Bord de l'Eau) and the "Rustic Venus" (La Venus Rustique). But here is a paganism whose ardor, by a contrast which brings up the ever present duality of his nature, ends in an inexpressible shiver of scorn:

"We look at each other, astonished, immovable,
And both are so pale that it makes us fear."

* * * * * * *

"Alas! through all our senses slips life itself away."

This ending of the "Water's Edge" is less sinister than the murder and the vision of horror which terminate the pantheistic hymn of the "Rustic Venus." Considered as documents revealing the cast of mind of him who composed them, these two lyrical essays are especially significant, since they were spontaneous. They explain why De Maupassant, in

the early years of production, voluntarily chose, as the heroes of his stories, creatures very near to primitive existence, peasants, sailors, poachers, girls of the farm, and the source of the vigor with which he describes these rude figures. The robustness of his animalism permits him fully to imagine all the simple sensations of these beings, while his pessimism, which tinges these sketches of brutal customs with an element of delicate scorn, preserves him from coarseness. It is this constant and involuntary antithesis which gives unique value to those Norman scenes which have contributed so much to his glory. It corresponds to those two contradictory tendencies in literary art, which seek always to render life in motion with the most intense coloring, and still to make more and more subtle the impression of this life. How is one ambition to be satisfied at the same time as the other, since all gain in color and movement brings about a diminution of sensibility, and conversely? The paradox of his constitution permitted to Maupassant this seemingly impossible accord, aided as he was by an intellect whose influence was all powerful upon his development—the writer I mention above, Gustave Flaubert.

These meetings of a pupil and a master, both great, are indeed rare. They present, in fact, some troublesome conditions, the first of which is a profound analogy between two types of thought. There must have been, besides, a reciprocity of affection, which does not often obtain between a renowned senior who is growing old and an obscure junior, whose renown is increasing. From generation to generation, envy reascends no less than she redescends. For the

honor of French men of letters, let us add that this exceptional phenomenon has manifested itself twice in the nineteenth century. Mérimée, whom I have also named, received from Stendhal, at twenty, the same benefits that Maupassant received from Flaubert.

The author of "Une Vie" and the writer of "Clara Jozul" resemble each other, besides, in a singular and analogous circumstance. Both achieved renown at the first blow, and by a masterpiece which they were able to equal but never surpass. Both were misanthropes early in life, and practised to the end the ancient advice that the disciple of Beyle carried upon his seal: *μεμνήσο απιστεῖν* — "Remember to distrust." And, at the same time, both had delicate, tender hearts under this affectation of cynicism, both were excellent sons, irreproachable friends, indulgent masters, and both were idolized by their inferiors. Both were worldly, yet still loved a wanderer's life; both joined to a constant taste for luxury an irresistible desire for solitude. Both belonged to the extreme left of the literature of their epoch, but kept themselves from excess and used with a judgment marvelously sure the sounder principles of their school. They knew how to remain lucid and classic, in taste as much as in form — Mérimée through all the audacity of a fancy most exotic, and Maupassant in the realism of the most varied and exact observation. At a little distance they appear to be two patterns, identical in certain traits, of the same family of minds, and Tourgenief, who knew and loved the one and the other, never failed to class them as brethren.

They are separated, however, by profound differences, which perhaps belong less to their nature than

to that of the masters from whom they received their impulses: Stendhal, so alert, so mobile, after a youth passed in war and a ripe age spent in vagabond journeys, rich in experiences, immediate and personal; Flaubert so poor in direct impressions, so paralyzed by his health, by his family, by his theories even, and so rich in reflections, for the most part solitary.

Among the theories of the anatomist of "Madame Bovary," there are two which appear without ceasing in his Correspondence, under one form or another, and these are the ones which are most strongly evident in the art of De Maupassant. We now see the consequences which were inevitable by reason of them, endowed as Maupassant was with a double power of feeling life bitterly, and at the same time with so much of animal force. The first theory bears upon the choice of personages and the story of the romance, the second upon the character of the style. The son of a physician, and brought up in the rigors of scientific method, Flaubert believed this method to be efficacious in art as in science. For instance, in the writing of a romance, he seemed to be as scientific as in the development of a history of customs, in which the essential is absolute exactness and local color. He therefore naturally wished to make the most scrupulous and detailed observation of the environment.

Thus is explained the immense labor in preparation which his stories cost him — the story of "Madame Bovary," of "The Sentimental Education," and "Bouvard and Pécuchet," documents containing as much *minutiæ* as his historical stories. Beyond everything he tried to select details that were eminently

significant. Consequently he was of the opinion that the romance writer should discard all that lessened this significance, that is, extraordinary events and singular heroes. The exceptional personage, it seemed to him, should be suppressed, as should also high dramatic incident, since, produced by causes less general, these have a range more restricted. The truly scientific romance writer, proposing to paint a certain class, will attain his end more effectively if he incarnate personages of the middle order, and, consequently, paint traits common to that class. And not only middle-class traits, but middle-class adventures.

From this point of view, examine the three great romances of the Master from Rouen, and you will see that he has not lost sight of this first and greatest principle of his art, any more than he has of the second, which was that these documents should be drawn up in prose of absolutely perfect technique. We know with what passionate care he worked at his phrases, and how indefatigably he changed them over and over again. Thus he satisfied that instinct of beauty which was born of his romantic soul, while he gratified the demand of truth which inhered from his scientific training by his minute and scrupulous exactness.

The theory of the mean of truth on one side, as the foundation of the subject,—"the humble truth," as he termed it at the beginning of "Une Vie,"—and of the agonizing of beauty on the other side, in composition, determines the whole use that Maupassant made of his literary gifts. It helped to make more intense and more systematic that dainty yet dangerous pessimism which in him was innate. The mid-

dle-class personage, in wearisome society like ours, is always a caricature, and the happenings are nearly always vulgar. When one studies a great number of them, one finishes by looking at humanity from the angle of disgust and despair. The philosophy of the romances and novels of De Maupassant is so continuously and profoundly surprising that one becomes overwhelmed by it. It reaches limitation; it seems to deny that man is susceptible to grandeur, or that motives of a superior order can uplift and ennoble the soul, but it does so with a sorrow that is profound. All that portion of the sentimental and moral world which in itself is the highest remains closed to it.

In revenge, this philosophy finds itself in a relation cruelly exact with the half-civilization of our day. By that I mean the poorly educated individual who has rubbed against knowledge enough to justify a certain egoism, but who is too poor in faculty to conceive an ideal, and whose native grossness is corrupted beyond redemption. Under his blouse, or under his coat — whether he calls himself Renardet, as does the foul assassin in "Petite Roque," or Duroy, as does the sly hero of "Bel-Ami," or Bretigny, as does the vile seducer of "Mont Oriol," or Césaire, the son of Old Amable in the novel of that name, — this degraded type abounds in Maupassant's stories, evoked with a ferocity almost jovial where it meets the robustness of temperament which I have pointed out, a ferocity which gives them a reality more exact still because the half-civilized person is often impulsive and, in consequence, the physical easily predominates. There, as elsewhere, the degenerate is

everywhere a degenerate who gives the impression of being an ordinary man.

There are quantities of men of this stamp in large cities. No writer has felt and expressed this complex temperament with more justice than De Maupassant, and, as he was an infinitely careful observer of *milieu* and landscape and all that constitutes a precise middle distance, his novels can be considered an irrefutable record of the social classes which he studied at a certain time and along certain lines. The Norman peasant and the Provençal peasant, for example; also the small officeholder. the gentleman of the provinces, the country squire, the clubman of Paris, the journalist of the boulevard, the doctor at the spa, the commercial artist, and, on the feminine side, the servant girl, the working girl, the *demi-grisette*, the street girl, rich or poor, the gallant lady of the city and of the provinces, and the society woman—these are some of the figures that he has painted at many sittings, and whom he used to such effect that the novels and romances in which they are painted have come to be history. Just as it is impossible to comprehend the Rome of the Cæsars without the work of Petronius, so is it impossible to fully comprehend the France of 1850–90 without these stories of Maupassant. They are no more the whole image of the country than the "Satyricon" was the whole image of Rome, but what their author has wished to paint, he has painted to the life and with a brush that is graphic in the extreme.

If Maupassant had only painted, in general fashion, the characters and the phase of literature mentioned, he would not be distinguished from other writers

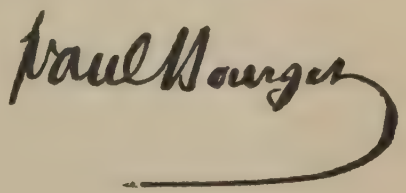
of the group called "naturalists." His true glory is in the extraordinary superiority of his art. He did not invent it, and his method is not alien to that of "Madame Bovary," but he knew how to give it a suppleness, a variety, and a freedom which were always wanting in Flaubert. The latter, in his best pages, is always strained. To use the expressive metaphor of the Greek athletes, he "smells of the oil." When one recalls that when attacked by hysteric epilepsy, Flaubert postponed the crisis of the terrible malady by means of sedatives, this strained atmosphere of labor—I was going to say of stupor—which pervades his work is explained. He is an athlete, a runner, but one who drags at his feet a terrible weight. He is in the race only for the prize of effort, an effort of which every motion reveals the intensity.

Maupassant, on the other hand, if he suffered from a nervous lesion, gave no sign of it, except in his heart. His intelligence was bright and lively, and above all, his imagination, served by senses always on the alert, preserved for some years an astonishing freshness of direct vision. If his art was due to Flaubert, it is no more belittling to him than if one call Raphael an imitator of Perugini.

Like Flaubert, he excelled in composing a story, in distributing the facts with subtle gradation, in bringing in at the end of a familiar dialogue something startlingly dramatic; but such composition, with him, seems easy, and while the descriptions are marvelously well established in his stories, the reverse is true of Flaubert's, which always appear a little veneered. Maupassant's phrasing, however dramatic it may be, remains easy and flowing.

Maupassant always sought for large and harmonious rhythm in his deliberate choice of terms, always chose sound, wholesome language, with a constant care for technical beauty. Inheriting from his master an instrument already forged, he wielded it with a surer skill. In the quality of his style, at once so firm and clear, so gorgeous yet so sober, so supple and so firm, he equals the writers of the seventeenth century. His method, so deeply and simply French, succeeds in giving an indescribable "tang" to his descriptions. If observation from nature imprints upon his tales the strong accent of reality, the prose in which they are shrined so conforms to the genius of the race as to smack of the soil.

It is enough that the critics of to-day place Guy de Maupassant among our classic writers. He has his place in the ranks of pure French genius, with the Regniers, the La Fontaines, the Molières. And those signs of secret ill divined everywhere under this wholesome prose surround it for those who knew and loved him with a pathos that is inexpressible.



INTRODUCTION

BORN in the middle year of the nineteenth century, and fated unfortunately never to see its close, Guy de Maupassant was probably the most versatile and brilliant among the galaxy of novelists who enriched French literature between the years 1800 and 1900. Poetry, drama, prose of short and sustained effort, and volumes of travel and description, each sparkling with the same minuteness of detail and brilliancy of style, flowed from his pen during the twelve years of his literary life.

Although his genius asserted itself in youth, he had the patience of the true artist, spending his early manhood in cutting and polishing the facets of his genius under the stern though paternal mentorship of Gustave Flaubert. Not until he had attained the age of thirty did he venture on publication, challenging criticism for the first time with a volume of poems.

Many and various have been the judgments passed upon Maupassant's work. But now that the perspective of time is lengthening, enabling us to form a more deliberate, and therefore a juster, view of his complete achievement, we are driven irresistibly to the conclusion that the force that shaped and swayed

Maupassant's prose writings was the conviction that in life there could be no phase so noble or so mean, so honorable or so contemptible, so lofty or so low as to be unworthy of chronicling,—no groove of human virtue or fault, success or failure, wisdom or folly that did not possess its own peculiar psychological aspect and therefore demanded analysis.

To this analysis Maupassant brought a facile and dramatic pen, a penetration as searching as a probe, and a power of psychological vision that in its minute detail, now pathetic, now ironical, in its merciless revelation of the hidden springs of the human heart, whether of aristocrat, *bourgeois*, peasant, or priest, allow one to call him a Meissonier in words.

The school of romantic realism which was founded by Merimée and Balzac found its culmination in De Maupassant. He surpassed his mentor, Flaubert, in the breadth and vividness of his work, and one of the greatest of modern French critics has recorded the deliberate opinion, that of all Taine's pupils Maupassant had the greatest command of language and the most finished and incisive style. Robust in imagination and fired with natural passion, his psychological curiosity kept him true to human nature, while at the same time his mental eye, when fixed upon the most ordinary phases of human conduct, could see some new motive or aspect of things hitherto unnoticed by the careless crowd.

It has been said by casual critics that Maupassant lacked one quality indispensable to the production of truly artistic work, viz: an absolutely normal, that is, moral, point of view. The answer to this criticism is obvious. No dissector of the gamut of human pas-

sion and folly in all its tones could present aught that could be called new, if ungifted with a viewpoint totally out of the ordinary plane. Cold and merciless in the use of this *point de vue* De Maupassant undoubtedly is, especially in such vivid depictions of love, both physical and maternal, as we find in "L'histoire d'une fille de ferme" and "La femme de Paul." But then the surgeon's scalpel never hesitates at giving pain, and pain is often the road to health and ease. Some of Maupassant's short stories are sermons more forcible than any moral dissertation could ever be.

Of De Maupassant's sustained efforts "Une Vie" may bear the palm. This romance has the distinction of having changed Tolstoi from an adverse critic into a warm admirer of the author. To quote the Russian moralist upon the book:

> "'Une Vie' is a romance of the best type, and in my judgment the greatest that has been produced by any French writer since Victor Hugo penned 'Les Misérables.' Passing over the force and directness of the narrative, I am struck by the intensity, the grace, and the insight with which the writer treats the new aspects of human nature which he finds in the life he describes."

And as if gracefully to recall a former adverse criticism, Tolstoi adds:

> "I find in the book, in almost equal strength, the three cardinal qualities essential to great work, viz: moral purpose, perfect style, and absolute sincerity. . . . Maupassant is a man whose vision has penetrated the silent depths of human life, and from that vantage-ground interprets the struggle of humanity."

"Bel-Ami" appeared almost two years after "Une Vie," that is to say, about 1885. Discussed and criti-

cised as it has been, it is in reality a satire, an indignant outburst against the corruption of society which in the story enables an ex-soldier, devoid of conscience, honor, even of the commonest regard for others, to gain wealth and rank. The purport of the story is clear to those who recognize the ideas that governed Maupassant's work, and even the hasty reader or critic, on reading "Mont Oriol," which was published two years later and is based on a combination of the *motifs* which inspired "Une Vie" and "Bel-Ami," will reconsider former hasty judgments, and feel, too, that beneath the triumph of evil which calls forth Maupassant's satiric anger there lies the substratum on which all his work is founded, viz: the persistent, ceaseless questioning of a soul unable to reconcile or explain the contradiction between love in life and inevitable death. Who can read in "Bel-Ami" the terribly graphic description of the consumptive journalist's demise, his frantic clinging to life, and his refusal to credit the slow and merciless approach of death, without feeling that the question asked at Naishapur many centuries ago is still waiting for the solution that is always promised but never comes?

In the romances which followed, dating from 1888 to 1890, a sort of calm despair seems to have settled down upon De Maupassant's attitude toward life. Psychologically acute as ever, and as perfect in style and sincerity as before, we miss the note of anger. Fatality is the keynote, and yet, sounding low, we detect a genuine subtone of sorrow. Was it a prescience of 1893? So much work to be done, so much work demanded of him, the world of Paris,

in all its brilliant and attractive phases, at his feet, and yet—inevitable, ever advancing death, with the question of life still unanswered.

This may account for some of the strained situations we find in his later romances. Vigorous in frame and hearty as he was, the atmosphere of his mental processes must have been vitiated to produce the dainty but dangerous pessimism that pervades some of his later work. This was partly a consequence of his honesty and partly of mental despair. He never accepted other people's views on the questions of life. He looked into such problems for himself, arriving at the truth, as it appeared to him, by the logic of events, often finding evil where he wished to find good, but never hoodwinking himself or his readers by adapting or distorting the reality of things to suit a preconceived idea.

Maupassant was essentially a worshiper of the eternal feminine. He was persuaded that without the continual presence of the gentler sex man's existence would be an emotionally silent wilderness. No other French writer has described and analyzed so minutely and comprehensively the many and various motives and moods that shape the conduct of a woman in life. Take for instance the wonderfully subtle analysis of a woman's heart as wife and mother that we find in "Une Vie." Could aught be more delicately incisive? Sometimes in describing the apparently inexplicable conduct of a certain woman he leads his readers to a point where a false step would destroy the spell and bring the reproach of banality and ridicule upon the tale. But the catastrophe never occurs. It was necessary to stand poised upon the brink of the preci-

pice to realize the depth of the abyss and feel the terror of the fall.

Closely allied to this phase of Maupassant's nature was the peculiar feeling of loneliness that every now and then breaks irresistibly forth in the course of some short story. Of kindly soul and genial heart, he suffered not only from the oppression of spirit caused by the lack of humanity, kindliness, sanity, and harmony which he encountered daily in the world at large, but he had an ever abiding sense of the invincible, unbanishable solitariness of his own inmost self. I know of no more poignant expression of such a feeling than the cry of despair which rings out in the short story called "Solitude," in which he describes the insurmountable barrier which exists between man and man, or man and woman, however intimate the friendship between them. He could picture but one way of destroying this terrible loneliness, the attainment of a spiritual — a divine — state of love, a condition to which he would give no name utterable by human lips, lest it be profaned, but for which his whole being yearned. How acutely he felt his failure to attain his deliverance may be drawn from his wail that mankind has no *universal* measure of happiness.

"Each one of us," writes De Maupassant, "forms for himself an illusion through which he views the world, be it poetic, sentimental, joyous, melancholy, or dismal; an illusion of beauty, which is a human convention; of ugliness, which is a matter of opinion; of truth, which, alas, is never immutable." And he concludes by asserting that the happiest artist is he who approaches most closely to the truth of things as he sees them through his own particular illusion.

Salient points in De Maupassant's genius were that he possessed the rare faculty of holding direct communion with his gifts, and of writing from their dictation as it was interpreted by his senses. He had no patience with writers who in striving to present life as a whole purposely omit episodes that reveal the influence of the senses. "As well," he says, "refrain from describing the effect of intoxicating perfumes upon man as omit the influence of beauty on the temperament of man."

De Maupassant's dramatic instinct was supremely powerful. He seems to select unerringly the one thing in which the soul of the scene is prisoned, and, making that his keynote, gives a picture in words which haunt the memory like a strain of music. The description of the ride of Madame Tellier and her companions in a country cart through a Norman landscape is an admirable example. You smell the masses of the colza in blossom, you see the yellow carpets of ripe corn spotted here and there by the blue coronets of the cornflower, and rapt by the red blaze of the poppy beds and bathed in the fresh greenery of the landscape, you share in the emotions felt by the happy party in the country cart. And yet with all his vividness of description, De Maupassant is always sober and brief. He had the genius of condensation and the reserve which is innate in power, and to his reader could convey as much in a paragraph as could be expressed in a page by many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Flaubert not excepted.

Apart from his novels, De Maupassant's tales may be arranged under three heads: Those that concern themselves with Norman peasant life; those that deal

with Government employees (Maupassant himself had long been one) and the Paris middle classes, and those that represent the life of the fashionable world, as well as the weird and fantastic ideas of the later years of his career. Of these three groups the tales of the Norman peasantry perhaps rank highest. He depicts the Norman farmer in surprisingly free and bold strokes, revealing him in all his caution, astuteness, rough gaiety, and homely virtue.

The tragic stage of De Maupassant's life may, I think, be set down as beginning just before the drama of "Musotte" was issued, in conjunction with Jacques Normand, in 1891. He had almost given up the hope of interpreting his puzzles, and the struggle between the falsity of the life which surrounded him and the nobler visions which possessed him was wearing him out. Doubtless he resorted to unwise methods for the dispelling of physical lassitude or for surcease from troubling mental problems. To this period belong such weird and horrible fancies as are contained in the short stories known as "He" and "The Diary of a Madman." Here and there, we know, were rising in him inklings of a finer and less sordid attitude 'twixt man and woman throughout the world and of a purer constitution of existing things which no exterior force should blemish or destroy. But with these yearningly prophetic gleams came a period of mental death. Then the physical veil was torn aside and for Guy de Maupassant the riddle of existence was answered.

Robert Arnot

MADEMOISELLE FIFI

THE Major Graf* von Farlsberg, the Prussian commandant, was reading his newspaper, lying back in a great armchair, with his booted feet on the beautiful marble fireplace, where his spurs had made two holes, which grew deeper every day, during the three months that he had been in the château of Urville.

A cup of coffee was smoking on a small, inlaid table, which was stained with liquors, burnt by cigars, notched by the penknife of the victorious officer, who occasionally would stop while sharpening a pencil, to jot down figures, or to make a drawing on it, just as it took his fancy.

When he had read his letters and the German newspapers, which his baggage-master had brought him, he got up, and after throwing three or four enormous pieces of green wood on to the fire—for these gentlemen were gradually cutting down the park in order to keep themselves warm—he went

* Count.

to the window. The rain was descending in torrents, a regular Normandy rain, which looked as if it were being poured out by some furious hand, a slanting rain, which was as thick as a curtain, and which formed a kind of wall with oblique stripes, and which deluged everything, a regular rain, such as one frequently experiences in the neighborhood of Rouen, which is the watering-pot of France.

For a long time the officer looked at the sodden turf, and at the swollen Andelle beyond it, which was overflowing its banks, and he was drumming a waltz from the Rhine on the window-panes, with his fingers, when a noise made him turn round; it was his second in command, Captain Baron von Kelweinstein.

The major was a giant, with broad shoulders, and a long, fair beard, which hung like a cloth on to his chest. His whole, solemn person suggested the idea of a military peacock, a peacock who was carrying his tail spread out on to his breast. He had cold, gentle, blue eyes, and the scar from a sword-cut, which he had received in the war with Austria; he was said to be an honorable man, as well as a brave officer.

The captain, a short, red-faced man, who was tightly girthed in at the waist, had his red hair cropped quite close to his head, and in certain lights almost looked as if he had been rubbed over with phosphorus. He had lost two front teeth one night, though he could not quite remember how. This defect made him speak so that he could not always be understood, and he had a bald patch on the top of his head, which made him look rather like a monk,

with a fringe of curly, bright, golden hair round the circle of bare skin.

The commandant shook hands with him, and drank his cup of coffee (the sixth that morning) at a draught, while he listened to his subordinate's report of what had occurred; and then they both went to the window, and declared that it was a very unpleasant outlook. The major, who was a quiet man, with a wife at home, could accommodate himself to everything; but the captain, who was rather fast, being in the habit of frequenting low resorts, and much given to women, was mad at having been shut up for three months in the compulsory chastity of that wretched hole.

There was a knock at the door, and when the commandant said, "Come in," one of their automatic soldiers appeared, and by his mere presence announced that breakfast was ready. In the dining-room, they met three other officers of lower rank: a lieutenant, Otto von Grossling, and two sub-lieutenants, Fritz Scheunebarg, and Count von Eyrick, a very short, fair-haired man, who was proud and brutal toward men, harsh toward prisoners, and very violent.

Since he had been in France, his comrades had called him nothing but "Mademoiselle Fifi." They had given him that nickname on account of his dandified style and small waist, which looked as if he wore stays, from his pale face, on which his budding mustache scarcely showed, and on account of the habit he had acquired of employing the French expression, *fi, fi donc,* which he pronounced with

a slight whistle, when he wished to express his sovereign contempt for persons or things.

The dining-room of the château was a magnificent long room, whose fine old mirrors, now cracked by pistol bullets, and Flemish tapestry, now cut to ribbons and hanging in rags in places, from sword-cuts, told too well what Mademoiselle Fifi's occupation was during his spare time.

There were three family portraits on the walls; a steel-clad knight, a cardinal, and a judge, who were all smoking long porcelain pipes, which had been inserted into holes in the canvas, while a lady in a long, pointed waist proudly exhibited an enormous pair of mustaches, drawn with a piece of charcoal.

The officers ate their breakfast almost in silence in that mutilated room, which looked dull in the rain, and melancholy under its vanquished appearance, although its old, oak floor had become as solid as the stone floor of a public-house.

When they had finished eating, and were smoking and drinking, they began, as usual, to talk about the dull life they were leading. The bottles of brandy and of liquors passed from hand to hand, and all sat back in their chairs, taking repeated sips from their glasses, and scarcely removing the long, bent stems, which terminated in china bowls painted in a manner to delight a Hottentot, from their mouths.

As soon as their glasses were empty, they filled them again, with a gesture of resigned weariness, but Mademoiselle Fifi emptied his every minute, and a soldier immediately gave him another. They were enveloped in a cloud of strong tobacco smoke; they

seemed to be sunk in a state of drowsy, stupid intoxication, in that dull state of drunkenness of men who have nothing to do, when suddenly, the baron sat up, and said: "By heavens! This cannot go on; we must think of something to do." And on hearing this, Lieutenant Otto and Sub-lieutenant Fritz, who pre-eminently possessed the grave, heavy German countenance, said: "What, Captain?"

He thought for a few moments, and then replied: "What? Well, we must get up some entertainment, if the commandant will allow us."

"What sort of an entertainment, captain?" the major asked, taking his pipe out of his mouth.

"I will arrange all that, commandant," the baron said. "I will send *Le Devoir* to Rouen, who will bring us some ladies. I know where they can be found. We will have supper here, as all the materials are at hand, and, at least, we shall have a jolly evening."

Graf von Farlsberg shrugged his shoulders with a smile: "You must surely be mad, my friend."

But all the other officers got up, surrounded their chief, and said: "Let the captain have his own way, commandant; it is terribly dull here."

And the major ended by yielding. "Very well," he replied, and the baron immediately sent for *Le Devoir*.

The latter was an old corporal who had never been seen to smile, but who carried out all the orders of his superiors to the letter, no matter what they might be. He stood there, with an impassive face, while he received the baron's instructions, and then went out; five minutes later a large wagon belonging

to the military train, covered with a miller's tilt, galloped off as fast as four horses could take it, under the pouring rain, and the officers all seemed to awaken from their lethargy, their looks brightened, and they began to talk.

Although it was raining as hard as ever, the major declared that it was not so dull, and Lieutenant von Grossling said with conviction, that the sky was clearing up, while Mademoiselle Fifi did not seem to be able to keep in his place. He got up, and sat down again, and his bright eyes seemed to be looking for something to destroy. Suddenly, looking at the lady with the mustaches, the young fellow pulled out his revolver, and said: "You shall not see it." And without leaving his seat he aimed, and with two successive bullets cut out both the eyes of the portrait.

"Let us make a mine!" he then exclaimed, and the conversation was suddenly interrupted, as if they had found some fresh and powerful subject of interest. The mine was his invention, his method of destruction, and his favorite amusement.

When he left the château, the lawful owner, Count Fernand d'Amoys d'Urville, had not had time to carry away or to hide anything, except the plate, which had been stowed away in a hole made in one of the walls, so that, as he was very rich and had good taste, the large drawing-room, which opened into the dining-room, had looked like the gallery in a museum, before his precipitate flight.

Expensive oil-paintings, water-colors, and drawings hung upon the walls, while on the tables, on the hanging shelves, and in elegant glass cupboards, there were a thousand knickknacks: small vases, statuettes,

groups in Dresden china, grotesque Chinese figures, old ivory, and Venetian glass, which filled the large room with their precious and fantastical array.

Scarcely anything was left now; not that the things had been stolen, for the major would not have allowed that, but Mademoiselle Fifi *would have a mine*, and on that occasion all the officers thoroughly enjoyed themselves for five minutes. The little marquis went into the drawing-room to get what he wanted, and he brought back a small, delicate china teapot, which he filled with gunpowder, and carefully introduced a piece of German tinder into it, through the spout. Then he lighted it, and took this infernal machine into the next room; but he came back immediately, and shut the door. The Germans all stood expectantly, their faces full of childish, smiling curiosity, and as soon as the explosion had shaken the château, they all rushed in at once.

Mademoiselle Fifi, who got in first, clapped his hands in delight at the sight of a terra-cotta Venus, whose head had been blown off, and each picked up pieces of porcelain, and wondered at the strange shape of the fragments, while the major was looking with a paternal eye at the large drawing-room which had been wrecked in such a Neronic fashion, and which was strewn with the fragments of works of art. He went out first, and said, with a smile: "He managed that very well!"

But there was such a cloud of smoke in the dining-room, mingled with the tobacco smoke, that they could not breathe, so the commandant opened the window, and all the officers, who had gone into the room for a glass of cognac, went up to it.

The moist air blew into the room, and brought a sort of spray with it, which powdered their beards. They looked at the tall trees which were dripping with the rain, at the broad valley which was covered with mist, and at the church spire in the distance, which rose up like a gray point in the beating rain.

The bells had not rung since their arrival. That was the only resistance which the invaders had met with in the neighborhood. The parish priest had not refused to take in and to feed the Prussian soldiers; he had several times even drunk a bottle of beer or claret with the hostile commandant, who often employed him as a benevolent intermediary; but it was no use to ask him for a single stroke of the bells; he would sooner have allowed himself to be shot. That was his way of protesting against the invasion, a peaceful and silent protest, the only one, he said, which was suitable to a priest, who was a man of mildness, and not of blood; and everyone, for twenty-five miles round, praised Abbé Chantavoine's firmness and heroism, in venturing to proclaim the public mourning by the obstinate silence of his church bells.

The whole village grew enthusiastic over his resistance, and was ready to back up their pastor and to risk anything, as they looked upon that silent protest as the safeguard of the national honor. It seemed to the peasants that thus they had deserved better of their country than Belfort and Strassburg, that they had set an equally valuable example, and that the name of their little village would become immortalized by that; but with that exception, they refused their Prussian conquerors nothing.

The commandant and his officers laughed among themselves at that inoffensive courage, and as the people in the whole country round showed themselves obliging and compliant toward them, they willingly tolerated their silent patriotism. Only little Count Wilhelm would have liked to have forced them to ring the bells. He was very angry at his superior's politic compliance with the priest's scruples, and every day he begged the commandant to allow him to sound "ding-dong, ding-dong," just once, only just once, just by way of a joke. And he asked it like a wheedling woman, in the tender voice of some mistress who wishes to obtain something, but the commandant would not yield, and to console *herself*, Mademoiselle Fifi made *a mine* in the château.

The five men stood there together for some minutes, inhaling the moist air, and at last, Lieutenant Fritz said, with a laugh: "The ladies will certainly not have fine weather for their drive." Then they separated, each to his own duties, while the captain had plenty to do in seeing about the dinner.

When they met again, as it was growing dark, they began to laugh at seeing each other as dandified and smart as on the day of a grand review. The commandant's hair did not look as gray as it did in the morning, and the captain had shaved—had only kept his mustache on, which made him look as if he had a streak of fire under his nose.

In spite of the rain, they left the window open, and one of them went to listen from time to time. At a quarter past six the baron said he heard a rumbling in the distance. They all rushed down, and

soon the wagon drove up at a gallop with its four horses, splashed up to their backs, steaming and panting. Five women got out at the bottom of the steps, five handsome girls whom a comrade of the captain, to whom *Le Devoir* had taken his card, had selected with care.

They had not required much pressing, as they were sure of being well treated, for they had got to know the Prussians in the three months during which they had had to do with them. So they resigned themselves to the men as they did to the state of affairs. "It is part of our business, so it must be done," they said as they drove along; no doubt to allay some slight, secret scruples of conscience.

They went into the dining-room immediately, which looked still more dismal in its dilapidated state, when it was lighted up; while the table covered with choice dishes, the beautiful china and glass, and the plate, which had been found in the hole in the wall where its owner had hidden it, gave to the place the look of a bandits' resort, where they were supping after committing a robbery. The captain was radiant; he took hold of the women as if he were familiar with them; appraising them, kissing them, valuing them for what they were worth as *ladies of pleasure;* and when the three young men wanted to appropriate one each, he opposed them authoritatively, reserving to himself the right to apportion them justly, according to their several ranks, so as not to wound the hierarchy. Therefore, so as to avoid all discussion, jarring, and suspicion of partiality, he placed them all in a line according to height, and addressing the tallest, he said in a voice of command:

"What is your name?"

"Pamela," she replied, raising her voice.

Then he said: "Number One, called Pamela, is adjudged to the commandant."

Then, having kissed Blondina, the second, as a sign of proprietorship, he proffered stout Amanda to Lieutenant Otto, Eva, "the Tomato," to Sub-lieutenant Fritz, and Rachel, the shortest of them all, a very young, dark girl, with eyes as black as ink, a Jewess, whose snub nose confirmed by exception the rule which allots hooked noses to all her race, to the youngest officer, frail Count Wilhelm von Eyrick.

They were all pretty and plump, without any distinctive features, and all were very much alike in look and person, from their daily dissipation, and the life common to houses of public accommodation.

The three younger men wished to carry off their women immediately, under the pretext of finding them brushes and soap; but the captain wisely opposed this, for he said they were quite fit to sit down to dinner, and that those who went up would wish for a change when they came down, and so would disturb the other couples, and his experience in such matters carried the day. There were only many kisses; expectant kisses.

Suddenly Rachel choked, and began to cough until the tears came into her eyes, while smoke came through her nostrils. Under pretense of kissing her, the count had blown a whiff of tobacco into her mouth. She did not fly into a rage, and did not say a word, but she looked at her possessor with latent hatred in her dark eyes.

They sat down to dinner. The commandant seemed delighted; he made Pamela sit on his right, and Blondina on his left, and said, as he unfolded his table napkin: "That was a delightful idea of yours, captain."

Lieutenants Otto and Fritz, who were as polite as if they had been with fashionable ladies, rather intimidated their neighbors, but Baron von Kelweinstein gave the reins to all his vicious propensities, beamed, made doubtful remarks, and seemed on fire with his crown of red hair. He paid them compliments in French from the other side of the Rhine, and sputtered out gallant remarks, only fit for a low pothouse, from between his two broken teeth.

They did not understand him, however, and their intelligence did not seem to be awakened until he uttered nasty words and broad expressions, which were mangled by his accent. Then all began to laugh at once, like mad women, and fell against each other, repeating the words, which the baron then began to say all wrong, in order that he might have the pleasure of hearing them say doubtful things. They gave him as much of that stuff as he wanted, for they were drunk after the first bottle of wine, and, becoming themselves once more, and opening the door to their usual habits, they kissed the mustaches on the right and left of them, pinched their arms, uttered furious cries, drank out of every glass, and sang French couplets, and bits of German songs, which they had picked up in their daily intercourse with the enemy.

Soon the men themselves, intoxicated by that which was displayed to their sight and touch, grew

very amorous, shouted and broke the plates and dishes, while the soldiers behind them waited on them stolidly. The commandant was the only one who put any restraint upon himself.

Mademoiselle Fifi had taken Rachel on to his knees, and, getting excited, at one moment kissed the little black curls on her neck, inhaling the pleasant warmth of her body, and all the savor of her person, through the slight space there was between her dress and her skin, and at another pinched her furiously through the material, and made her scream, for he was seized with a species of ferocity, and tormented by his desire to hurt her. He often held her close to him, as if to make her part of himself, and put his lips in a long kiss on the Jewess's rosy mouth, until she lost her breath; and at last he bit her until a stream of blood ran down her chin and on to her bodice.

For the second time, she looked him full in the face, and as she bathed the wound, she said: "You will have to pay for that!"

But he merely laughed a hard laugh, and said: "I will pay."

At dessert, champagne was served, and the commandant rose, and in the same voice in which he would have drunk to the health of the Empress Augusta, he drank: "To our ladies!" Then a series of toasts began, toasts worthy of the lowest soldiers and of drunkards, mingled with filthy jokes, which were made still more brutal by their ignorance of the language. They got up, one after the other, trying to say something witty, forcing themselves to be funny, and the women, who were so drunk that

they almost fell off their chairs, with vacant looks and clammy tongues, applauded madly each time.

The captain, who no doubt wished to impart an appearance of gallantry to the orgy, raised his glass again, and said: "To our victories over hearts!" Thereupon Lieutenant Otto, who was a species of bear from the Black Forest, jumped up, inflamed and saturated with drink, and seized by an access of alcoholic patriotism, cried: "To our victories over France!"

Drunk as they were, the women were silent, and Rachel turned round with a shudder, and said: "Look here, I know some Frenchmen, in whose presence you would not dare to say that." But the little count, still holding her on his knees, began to laugh, for the wine had made him very merry, and said: "Ha! ha! ha! I have never met any of them, myself. As soon as we show ourselves, they run away!"

The girl, who was in a terrible rage, shouted into his face: "You are lying, you dirty scoundrel!"

For a moment, he looked at her steadily, with his bright eyes upon her, as he had looked at the portrait before he destroyed it with revolver bullets, and then he began to laugh: "Ah! yes, talk about them, my dear! Should we be here now, if they were brave?" Then getting excited, he exclaimed: "We are the masters! France belongs to us!" She jumped off his knees with a bound, and threw herself into her chair, while he rose, held out his glass over the table, and repeated: "France and the French, the woods, the fields, and the houses of France belong to us!"

The others, who were quite drunk, and who were suddenly seized by military enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of brutes, seized their glasses, and shouting, "Long live Prussia!" emptied them at a draught.

The girls did not protest, for they were reduced to silence, and were afraid. Even Rachel did not say a word, as she had no reply to make, and then the little count put his champagne glass, which had just been refilled, on to the head of the Jewess, and exclaimed: "All the women in France belong to us, also!"

At that she got up so quickly that the glass upset, spilling the amber colored wine on to her black hair as if to baptize her, and broke into a hundred fragments as it fell on to the floor. With trembling lips, she defied the looks of the officer, who was still laughing, and she stammered out, in a voice choked with rage: "That—that—that—is not true,—for you shall certainly not have any French women."

He sat down again, so as to laugh at his ease, and trying ineffectually to speak in the Parisian accent, he said: "That is good, very good! Then what did you come here for, my dear?"

She was thunderstruck, and made no reply for a moment, for in her agitation she did not understand him at first; but as soon as she grasped his meaning, she said to him indignantly and vehemently: "I! I! I am not a woman; I am only a strumpet, and that is all that Prussians want."

Almost before she had finished, he slapped her full in her face; but as he was raising his hand again, as if he would strike her, she, almost mad with passion, took up a small dessert knife from the table, and stabbed

him right in the neck, just above the breastbone. Something that he was going to say, was cut short in his throat, and he sat there, with his mouth half open, and a terrible look in his eyes.

All the officers shouted in horror, and leaped up tumultuously; but throwing her chair between Lieutenant Otto's legs, who fell down at full length, she ran to the window, opened it before they could seize her, and jumped out into the night and pouring rain.

In two minutes, Mademoiselle Fifi was dead. Fritz and Otto drew their swords and wanted to kill the women, who threw themselves at their feet and clung to their knees. With some difficulty the major stopped the slaughter, and had the four terrified girls locked up in a room under the care of two soldiers. Then he organized the pursuit of the fugitive, as carefully as if he were about to engage in a skirmish, feeling quite sure that she would be caught.

The table, which had been cleared immediately, now served as a bed on which to lay Fifi out, and the four officers made for the window, rigid and sobered, with the stern faces of soldiers on duty, and tried to pierce through the darkness of the night, amid the steady torrent of rain. Suddenly, a shot was heard, and then another, a long way off; and for four hours they heard, from time to time, near or distant reports and rallying cries, strange words uttered as a call, in guttural voices.

In the morning they all returned. Two soldiers had been killed and three others wounded by their comrades in the ardor of that chase, and in the confusion of such a nocturnal pursuit, but they had not caught Rachel.

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Then the inhabitants of the district were terrorized, the houses were turned topsy-turvy, the country was scoured and beaten up, over and over again, but the Jewess did not seem to have left a single trace of her passage behind her.

When the general was told of it, he gave orders to hush up the affair, so as not to set a bad example to the army, but he severely censured the commandant, who in turn punished his inferiors. The general had said: "One does not go to war in order to amuse oneself, and to caress prostitutes." And Graf von Farlsberg, in his exasperation, made up his mind to have his revenge on the district, but as he required a pretext for showing severity, he sent for the priest, and ordered him to have the bell tolled at the funeral of Count von Eyrick.

Contrary to all expectation, the priest showed himself humble and most respectful, and when Mademoiselle Fifi's body left the Château d'Urville on its way to the cemetery, carried by soldiers, preceded, surrounded, and followed by soldiers, who marched with loaded rifles, for the first time the bell sounded its funereal knell in a lively manner, as if a friendly hand were caressing it. At night it sounded again, and the next day, and every day; it rang as much as anyone could desire. Sometimes even, it would start at night, and sound gently through the darkness, seized by strange joy, awakened, one could not tell why. All the peasants in the neighborhood declared that it was bewitched, and nobody, except the priest and the sacristan would now go near the church tower, and they went because a poor girl was living there

in grief and solitude, secretly nourished by those two men.

She remained there until the German troops departed, and then one evening the priest borrowed the baker's cart, and himself drove his prisoner to Rouen. When they got there, he embraced her, and she quickly went back on foot to the establishment from which she had come, where the proprietress, who thought that she was dead, was very glad to see her.

A short time afterward, a patriot who had no prejudices, who liked her because of her bold deed, and who afterward loved her for herself, married her, and made a lady of her.

MONSIEUR PARENT

LITTLE George was piling hills of sand in one of the walks. He scooped the sand up with both his hands, made it into a pyramid, and then put a chestnut leaf on the top, and his father, sitting on an iron chair, was looking at him with concentrated and affectionate attention, seeing nobody else in the small public garden, which was full of people. All along the circular road other children were busy in the same manner, or were indulging in other childish games, while nursemaids were strolling two and two, with their bright cap-ribbons floating behind them, and carrying something wrapped up in lace, in their arms. Here and there little girls in short petticoats and bare legs were talking seriously together, while resting from trundling their hoops.

The sun was just disappearing behind the roofs of the Rue Saint-Lazare, but still shed its rays obliquely on that little overdressed crowd. The chestnut trees were lighted up with its yellow rays, and the three

fountains before the lofty porch of the church shone like molten silver.

Monsieur Parent looked at his boy sitting there in the dusk; he followed his slightest movements with affection in his glance; but accidentally looking up at the church clock, he saw that he was five minutes late, so he got up, took the child by the arm and shook his sand-covered dress, wiped his hands and led him in the direction of the Rue Blanche. He walked quickly, so as not to get in after his wife, but as the child could not keep up the pace, he took him up and carried him, though it made him pant when he had to walk up the steep street. Parent was a man of forty, turning gray already, rather stout. He had married, a few years previously, a young woman whom he dearly loved, but who now treated him with the severity and authority of an all-powerful despot. She found fault with him continually for everything that he did or did not do, reproached him bitterly for his slightest acts, his habits, his simple pleasures, his tastes, his movements and walk, and for having a round stomach and a placid voice.

He still loved her, however, but above all he loved the boy she had borne him, and George, who was now three, had become the greatest joy, in fact the preoccupation, of his heart. He himself had a modest private fortune, and lived without doing anything on his twenty thousand francs* a year, and his wife, who had been quite portionless, was constantly angry at her husband's inactivity.

* About $4000

At last he reached his house, put down the child, wiped his forehead and walked upstairs. When he got to the second floor, he rang. An old servant who had brought him up, one of those mistress-servants who are the tyrants of families, opened the door to him, and he asked her anxiously: "Has Madame come in yet?"

The servant shrugged her shoulders: "When have you ever known Madame to come home at half past six, Monsieur?"

And he replied with some embarrassment: "Very well; all the better; it will give me time to change my things, for I am very hot."

The servant looked at him with angry and contemptuous pity, and grumbled: "Oh! I can see that well enough, you are covered with perspiration, Monsieur. I suppose you walked quickly and carried the child, and only to have to wait until half past seven, perhaps, for Madame. I have made up my mind not to have it ready at the time, but shall get it for eight o'clock, and if you have to wait, I cannot help it; roast meat ought not to be burnt!"

Monsieur Parent, however, pretended not to hear, and only said: "All right! all right. You must wash George's hands, for he has been making sand pits. I will go and change my clothes; tell the maid to give the child a good washing."

And he went into his own room, and as soon as he got in he locked the door, so as to be alone, quite alone. He was so used now to being abused and badly treated, that he never thought himself safe, except when he was locked in. He no longer ventured even to think, reflect and reason with himself

unless he had secured himself against her looks and insinuations, by locking himself in. Having thrown himself into a chair, in order to rest for a few minutes before he put on clean linen, he remembered that Julie was beginning to be a fresh danger in the house. She hated his wife—that was quite plain; but she hated still more his friend Paul Limousin, who had continued to be the familiar and intimate friend of the house, after having been the inseparable companion of his bachelor days, which is very rare. It was Limousin who acted as a buffer between his wife and himself, and who defended him ardently, and even severely, against her undeserved reproaches, against crying scenes, and against all the daily miseries of his existence.

But now for six months, Julie had constantly been saying things against her mistress. She would repeat twenty times a day: "If I were you, Monsieur, I should not allow myself to be led by the nose like that. Well, well! But there—everyone according to his nature." And one day, she had even ventured to be insolent to Henriette, who, however, merely said to her husband, at night: "You know, the next time she speaks to me like that, I shall turn her out of doors." But she, who feared nothing, seemed to be afraid of the old servant, and Parent attributed her mildness to her consideration for the old domestic who had brought him up, and who had closed his mother's eyes. Now, however, Henriette's patience was exhausted, matters could not go on like that much longer, and he was frightened at the idea of what was going to happen. What could he do? To get rid of Julie seemed to him to be such a formida-

ble undertaking, that he hardly ventured to think of it; but it was just as impossible to uphold her against his wife, and before another month could pass, the situation between the two would become unbearable. He remained sitting there, with his arms hanging down, vaguely trying to discover some means to set matters straight, but without success, and he said to himself: "It is lucky that I have George; without him I should be very miserable."

Then he thought he would consult Limousin, but the recollection of the hatred that existed between his friend and the servant made him fear lest the former should advise him to turn her away, and again he was lost in doubt and sad uncertainty. Just then the clock struck seven, and he started up. Seven o'clock, and he had not even changed his clothes! Then, nervous and breathless, he undressed, put on a clean shirt, and hastily finished his toilette, as if he had been expected in the next room for some event of extreme importance; then he went into the drawing-room, happy at having nothing to fear. He glanced at the newspaper, went and looked out of the window, and then sat down on a sofa again. The door opened, and the boy came in, washed, brushed, and smiling, and Parent took him up in his arms and kissed him passionately; then he tossed him into the air, and held him up to the ceiling, but soon sat down again, as he was tired with all his efforts, and taking George on to his knee, he made him "ride a cock-horse." The child laughed and clapped his hands, and shouted with pleasure, as his father did, laughing until his big stomach shock, for it amused him almost more than it did the child.

Parent loved the boy with all the heart of a weak, resigned, ill-used man. He loved with mad bursts of affection, with caresses and with all the bashful tenderness which was hidden in him, and which had never found an outlet, even at the early period of his married life, for his wife had always shown herself cold and reserved. Just then, however, Julie came to the door, with a pale face and glistening eyes, and said in a voice which trembled with exasperation: "It is half past seven, Monsieur." Parent gave an uneasy and resigned look at the clock and replied: "Yes, it certainly is half past seven."

"Well, my dinner is quite ready, now."

Seeing the storm which was coming, he tried to turn it aside. "But did you not tell me when I came in that it would not be ready before eight?"

"Eight! what are you thinking about? You surely do not mean to let the child dine at eight o'clock? It would ruin his stomach. Just suppose that he only had his mother to look after him! She cares a great deal about her child. Oh! yes, we will speak about her; she is a mother. What a pity it is that there should be any mothers like her!"

Parent thought it was time to cut short a threatened scene, and so he said: "Julie, I will not allow you to speak like that of your mistress. You understand me, do you not? Do not forget it for the future."

The old servant, who was nearly choked with surprise, turned round and went out, slamming the door so violently after her, that the lusters on the chandelier rattled, and for some seconds it sounded as if a number of little invisible bells were ringing in the drawing-room.

George, who was surprised at first, began to clap his hands merrily, and blowing out his cheeks, he gave a great *boom* with all the strength of his lungs, to imitate the noise of the door banging. Then his father began tell him stories, but his mind was so preoccupied that he continually lost the thread of his story, and the child, who could not understand him, opened his eyes wide, in astonishment.

Parent never took his eyes off the clock; he thought he could see the hands move, and he would have liked to have stopped them until his wife's return. He was not vexed with her for being late, but he was frightened, frightened of her and of Julie, frightened at the thought of all that might happen. Ten minutes more would suffice to bring about an irreparable catastrophe, words and acts of violence that he did not dare to picture to himself. The mere idea of a quarrel, of loud voices, of insults flying through the air like bullets, of two women standing face to face, looking at each other and flinging abuse at each other, made his heart beat, and his tongue feel as parched as if he had been walking in the sun. He felt as limp as a rag, so limp that he no longer had the strength to lift up the child and dance him on his knee.

Eight o'clock struck, the door opened once more and Julie came in again. She had lost her look of exasperation, but now she put on an air of cold and determined resolution, which was still more formidable,

"Monsieur," she said, "I served your mother until the day of her death, and I have attended to you from your birth until now, and I think it may be said that I am devoted to the family."

She waited for a reply, and Parent stammered: "Why yes, certainly, my good Julie."

She continued: "You know quite well that I have never done anything for the sake of money, but always for your sake; that I have never deceived you nor lied to you, that you have never had to find fault with me."

"Certainly, my good Julie."

"Very well then, Monsieur, it cannot go on any longer like this. I have said nothing, and left you in your ignorance, out of respect and liking for you, but it is too much, and everyone in the neighborhood is laughing at you. Everybody knows about it, and so I must tell you also, although I do not like to repeat it. The reason why Madame comes in at any time she chooses is that she is doing abominable things."

He seemed stupefied, unable to understand, and could only stammer out: "Hold your tongue, you know I have forbidden you—" But she interrupted him with irresistible resolution.

"No, Monsieur, I must tell you everything, now. For a long time Madame has been doing wrong with Monsieur Limousin, I have seen them kiss scores of times behind the doors. Ah! you may be sure that if Monsieur Limousin had been rich, Madame would never have married Monsieur Parent. If you remember how the marriage was brought about, you would understand the matter from beginning to end."

Parent had risen, and stammered out, deadly pale: "Hold your tongue—hold your tongue or—"

She went on, however: "No, I mean to tell you everything. She married you from interest, and she deceived you from the very first day. It was all

settled between them beforehand. You need only reflect for a few moments to understand it, and then, as she was not satisfied with having married you, as she did not love you, she has made your life miserable, so miserable that it has almost broken my heart when I have seen it—"

He walked up and down the room with his hands clenched, repeating: "Hold your tongue—hold your tongue—" for he could find nothing else to say; the old servant, however, would not yield; she seemed resolved on everything, but George who had been at first astonished, and then frightened at those angry voices, began to utter shrill screams. He hid behind his father, and roared, with his face puckered up and his mouth open.

His son's screams exasperated Parent, and filled him with rage and courage. He rushed at Julie with both arms raised, ready to strike her, and exclaiming: "Ah! you wretch! you will send the child out of his senses." He was almost touching her, when she said:

"Monsieur, you may beat me if you like, me who reared you, but that will not prevent your wife from deceiving you, or alter the fact that your child is not yours!"

He stopped suddenly, and let his arms fall, and he remained standing opposite to her, so overwhelmed that he could understand nothing more, and she added: "You need only look at the child to know who is its father! He is the very image of Monsieur Limousin, you need only look at his eyes and forehead, why, a blind man could not be mistaken in him."

But he had taken her by the shoulders, and was now shaking her with all his might, while he ejaculated: "Viper! viper! Go out the room, viper! Go out, or I shall kill you! Go out! Go out!"

And with a desperate effort he threw her into the next room. She fell on to the table which was laid for dinner, breaking the glasses. Then, getting up, she put it between her master and herself, and while he was pursuing her, in order to take hold of her again, she flung terrible words at him: "You need only go out this evening after dinner, and come in again immediately, and you will see—you will see whether I have been lying! Just try it—and you will see." She had reached the kitchen door and escaped, but he ran after her, up the backstairs to her bedroom into which she had locked herself, and knocking at the door, he said: "You will leave my house this very instant."

"You may be certain of that, Monsieur," was her reply. "In an hour's time I shall not be here any longer."

He then went slowly downstairs again, holding on to the banister, so as not to fall, and went back to the drawing-room, where little George was sitting on the floor, crying; he fell into a chair, and looked at the child with dull eyes. He understood nothing, he knew nothing more, he felt dazed, stupified, mad, as if he had just fallen on his head, and he scarcely even remembered the dreadful things the servant had told him. Then, by degrees his reason grew clearer, like muddy water settling, and the abominable revelation began to work in his heart.

Julie had spoken so clearly, with so much force,

assurance, and sincerity, that he did not doubt her good faith, but he persisted in not believing her penetration. She might have been deceived, blinded by her devotion to him, carried away by unconscious hatred for Henriette. However, in measure as he tried to reassure and to convince himself, a thousand small facts recurred to his recollection, his wife's words, Limousin's looks, a number of unobserved, almost unseen trifles, her going out late, their simultaneous absence, and even some almost insignificant, but strange gestures, which he could not understand, now assumed an extreme importance for him and established a connivance between them. Everything that had happened since his engagement, surged through his over-excited brain, in his misery, and he doggedly went through his five years of married life, trying to recollect every detail month by month, day by day, and every disquieting circumstance that he remembered stung him to the quick like a wasp's sting.

He was not thinking of George any more, who was quiet now and on the carpet, but seeing that no notice was being taken of him, the boy began to cry. Then his father ran up to him, took him into his arms, and covered him with kisses. His child remained to him at any rate! What did the rest matter? He held him in his arms and pressed his lips on to his light hair, and relieved and composed, he whispered: "George,—my little George,—my dear little George!" But he suddenly remembered what Julie had said! Yes! she had said that he was Limousin's child. Oh! It could not be possible, surely! He could not believe it, could not doubt,

even for a moment, that George was his own child. It was one of those low scandals which spring from servants' brains! And he repeated: "George—my dear little George." The youngster was quiet again, now that his father was fondling him.

Parent felt the warmth of the little chest penetrate to his through their clothes, and it filled him with love, courage, and happiness; that gentle heat soothed him, fortified him, and saved him. Then he put the small, curly head away from him a little and looked at it affectionately, still repeating: "George! Oh! my little George!" But suddenly he thought: "Suppose he were to resemble Limousin, after all!"

There was something strange working within him, a fierce feeling, a poignant and violent sensation of cold in his whole body, in all his limbs, as if his bones had suddenly been turned to ice. Oh! if the child were to resemble Limousin—and he continued to look at George, who was laughing now. He looked at him with haggard, troubled eyes, and tried to discover whether there was any likeness in his forehead, in his nose, mouth, or cheeks. His thoughts wandered like they do when a person is going mad, and his child's face changed in his eyes, and assumed a strange look, and unlikely resemblances.

Julie had said: "A blind man could not be mistaken in him." There must, therefore, be something striking, an undeniable likeness! But what? The forehead? Yes, perhaps; Limousin's forehead, however, was narrower. The mouth, then? But Limousin wore a beard, and how could anyone verify the likeness between the plump chin of the child, and the hairy chin of that man?

Parent thought: "I cannot see anything now, I am too much upset; I could not recognize anything at present. I must wait; I must look at him well to-morrow morning, when I am getting up." And immediately afterward, he said to himself: "But if he is like me, I shall be saved! saved!" And he crossed the drawing-room in two strides, to examine the child's face by the side of his own in the looking-glass. He had George on his arm so that their faces might be close together, and he spoke out loud almost without knowing. "Yes—we have the same nose—the same nose perhaps, but that is not sure —and the same look. But no, he has blue eyes. Then—good heavens! I shall go mad. I cannot see anything more—I am going mad!"

He went away from the glass, to the other end of the drawing-room, and putting the child into an easy-chair, he fell into another and began to cry. He sobbed so violently that George, who was frightened at hearing him, immediately began to scream. The hall bell rang, and Parent gave a bound as if a bullet had gone through him.

"There she is," he said. "What shall I do?" And he ran and locked himself up in his room, so at any rate to have time to bathe his eyes. But in a few moments another ring at the bell made him jump again, and then he remembered that Julie had left without the housemaid knowing it, and so nobody would go to open the door. What was he to do? He went himself, and suddenly he felt brave, resolute, ready for dissimulation and the struggle. The terrible blow had matured him in a few moments, and then he wished to know the truth, he wished it

with the rage of a timid man, with the tenacity of an easy-going man who has been exasperated.

But nevertheless he trembled! Was it fear? Yes. Perhaps he was still frightened of her? Does one know how much excited cowardice there often is in boldness? He went to the door with furtive steps, and stopped to listen; his heart beat furiously, and he heard nothing but the noise of that dull throbbing in his chest, and of George's shrill voice, who was still crying in the drawing-room. Suddenly, however, the noise of the bell over his head startled him like an explosion; then he seized the lock, turned the key, and, opening the door, saw his wife and Limousin standing before him on the steps.

With an air of astonishment, which also betrayed a little irritation she said: "So *you* open the door now? Where is Julie?" His throat felt tight and his breathing was labored, and he tried to reply without being able to utter a word, so she continued:

"Are you dumb? I asked you where Julie is?"

And then he managed to say: "She—she—has—gone."

Whereupon his wife began to get angry. "What do you mean by *gone*. Where has she gone? Why?"

By degrees he regained his coolness, and he felt rising in him an immense hatred for that insolent woman who was standing before him. "Yes, she has gone altogether. I sent her away."

"You have sent away Julie? Why, you must be mad."

"Yes, I sent her away because she was insolent—and because, because she was ill-using the child."

"Julie?"

"Yes, Julie."

"What was she insolent about?"

"About you."

"About me?"

"Yes, because the dinner was burnt, and you did not come in."

"And she said?"

"She said offensive things about you, which I ought not—which I could not listen to."

"What did she say?"

"It is no good repeating them."

"I want to hear them."

"She said it was unfortunate for a man like me to be married to a woman like you, unpunctual, careless, disorderly, a bad mother, and a bad wife."

The young woman had gone into the anteroom followed by Limousin, who did not say a word at this unexpected position of things. She shut the door quickly, threw her cloak on to a chair, and going straight up to her husband, she stammered out:

"You say?—you say?—that I am—?"

He was very pale and calm and replied:

"I say nothing, my dear. I am simply repeating what Julie said to me, as you wanted to know what it was, and I wish you to remark that I turned her off just on account of what she said."

She trembled with a violent longing to tear out his beard and scratch his face. In his voice and manner she felt that he was asserting his position as master, although she had nothing to say by way of reply, and she tried to assume the offensive, by saying something unpleasant:

"I suppose you have had dinner?" she asked.

"No, I waited for you."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "It is very stupid of you to wait after half past seven," she said. "You might have guessed that I was detained, that I had a good many things to do, visits and shopping."

And then, suddenly, she felt that she wanted to explain how she had spent her time, and she told him in abrupt, haughty words, that having to buy some furniture in a shop a long distance off, very far off, in the Rue de Rennes, she had met Limousin at past seven o'clock on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, and that then she had gone with him to have something to eat in a restaurant, as she did not like to go to one by herself, although she was faint with hunger. That was how she had dined, with Limousin, if it could be called dining, for they had only had some soup and half a fowl, as they were in a great hurry to get back, and Parent replied simply:

"Well, you were quite right. I am not finding fault with you."

Then Limousin, who had not spoken till then, and who had been half hidden behind Henriette, came forward, and put out his hand, saying: "Are you very well?"

Parent took his hand and shaking it gently, replied: "Yes, I am very well."

But the young woman had felt a reproach in her husband's last words: "Finding fault! Why do you speak of finding fault? One might think that you meant to imply something."

"Not at all," he replied, by way of excuse. "I

simply meant, that I was not at all anxious although you were late, and that I did not find fault with you for it." She, however, took the high hand, and tried to find a pretext for a quarrel.

"Although I was late? One might really think that it was one o'clock in the morning, and that I spent my nights away from home."

"Certainly not, my dear. I said *late*, because I could find no other word. You said you should be back at half past six, and you returned at half past eight. That was surely being late! I understand it perfectly well. I am not at all surprised, even. But —but—I can hardly use any other word."

"But you pronounce them, as if I had been out all night."

"Oh! no; oh! no!"

She saw that he would yield on every point, and she was going into her own room, when at last she noticed that George was screaming, and then she asked, with some feeling: "Whatever is the matter with the child?"

"I told you, that Julie had been rather unkind to him."

"What has the wretch been doing to him?"

"Oh! Nothing much. She gave him a push, and he fell down."

She wanted to see her child, and ran into the dining-room, but stopped short at the sight of the table covered with spilt wine, with broken decanters and glasses and overturned saltcellars. "Who did all that mischief?" she asked.

"It was Julie who—"

But she interrupted him furiously: "That is too

much, really! Julie speaks of me as if I were a shameless woman, beats my child, breaks my plates and dishes, turns my house upside down, and it appears that you think it all quite natural."

"Certainly not, as I have got rid of her."

"Really!—you have got rid of her! But you ought to have given her in charge. In such cases, one ought to call in the Commissary of Police!"

"But, my dear—I really could not—there was no reason. It would have been very difficult."

She shrugged her shoulders, disdainfully: "There, you will never be anything but a poor, wretched fellow, a man without a will, without any firmness or energy. Ah! she must have said some nice things to you, your Julie, to make you turn her off like that. I should like to have been here for a minute, only for a minute." Then she opened the drawing-room door and ran to George, took him into her arms and kissed him, and said: "Georgie, what is it, my darling, my pretty one, my treasure?" But as she was fondling him he did not speak, and she repeated: "What is the matter with you?" And he, having seen with his child's eyes that something was wrong, replied "Julie beat papa."

Henriette turned toward her husband, in stupefaction at first, but then an irresistible desire to laugh shone in her eyes, passed like a slight shiver over her delicate cheeks, made her upper lip curl and her nostrils dilate, and at last a clear, bright burst of mirth came from her lips, a torrent of gaiety which was lively and sonorous as the song of a bird. With little mischievous exclamations which issued from between her white teeth, and hurt Parent as much as

a bite would have done she laughed: "Ha!—ha!—ha!—ha! she beat—she beat—my husband—ha!—ha!—ha! How funny! Do you hear, Limousin? Julie has beaten—has beaten—my—husband. Oh! dear—oh! dear—how very funny!"

But Parent protested: "No—no—it is not true, it is not true. It was I, on the contrary, who threw her into the dining-room so violently that she knocked the table over. The child did not see clearly, I beat her!"

"Here, my darling," Henriette said to her boy; "did Julie beat papa?"

"Yes, it was Julie," he replied. But then, suddenly turning to another idea, she said: "But the child has had no dinner? You have had nothing to eat, my pet?"

"No, mamma."

Then she again turned furiously on to her husband: "Why, you must be mad, utterly mad! It is half past eight, and George has had no dinner!"

He excused himself as best he could, for he had nearly lost his wits by the overwhelming scene and the explanation, and felt crushed by this ruin of his life.

"But, my dear, we were waiting for you, as I did not wish to dine without you. As you come home late every day, I expected you every moment."

She threw her bonnet, which she had kept on till then, into an easy-chair, and in an angry voice she said: "It is really intolerable to have to do with people who can understand nothing, who can divine nothing, and do nothing by themselves. So, I suppose, if I were to come in at twelve o'clock at night,

the child would have had nothing to eat? Just as if you could not have understood that, as it was after half past seven, I was prevented from coming home, that I had met with some hindrance!"

Parent trembled, for he felt that his anger was getting the upper hand, but Limousin interposed and turning toward the young woman, he said: "My dear friend, you are altogether unjust. Parent could not guess that you would come here so late, as you never do so, and then, how could you expect him to get over the difficulty all by himself, after having sent away Julie?"

But Henriette was very angry and replied: "Well, at any rate, he must get over the difficulty himself, for I will not help him. Let him settle it!" And she went into her own room, quite forgetting that her child had not had anything to eat.

Then Limousin immediately set to work to help his friend. He picked up the broken glasses which strewed the table, and took them out; he replaced the plates and knives and forks and put the child into his high chair, while Parent went to look for the lady's maid to wait at table. She came in, in great astonishment, as she had heard nothing in George's room, where she had been working. She soon, however, brought in the soup, a burnt leg of mutton, and mashed potatoes.

Parent sat by the side of the child, very much upset and distressed at all that had happened. He gave the boy his dinner, and endeavored to eat something himself, but he could only swallow with an effort, as if his throat had been paralyzed. By degrees he was seized by an insane desire to look at

Limousin, who was sitting opposite to him and making bread pellets, to see whether George was like him. He did not venture to raise his eyes for some time; at last, however, he made up his mind to do so, and gave a quick, sharp look at the face which he knew so well. He almost fancied that he had never looked at it carefully, since it looked so different to what he had anticipated. From time to time he scanned him, trying to find a likeness in the smallest lines of his face, in the slightest features, and then he looked at his son, under the pretext of feeding him.

Two words were sounding in his ears: "His father! his father! his father!" They buzzed in his temples at every beat of his heart. Yes, that man, that tranquil man who was sitting on the other side of the table was, perhaps, the father of his son, of George, of his little George. Parent left off eating; he could not manage any more; a terrible pain, one of those attacks of pain which make men scream, roll on the ground, and bite the furniture, was tearing at his entrails, and he felt inclined to take a knife and plunge it into his stomach. It would ease him and save him, and all would be over.

For how could he live now? Could he get up in the morning, join in the meals, go out into the streets, go to bed at night and sleep with that idea dominating him: "Limousin is little George's father!" No, he would not have the strength to walk a step, to dress himself, to think of anything, to speak to anybody! Every day, every hour, every moment, he would be trying to know, to guess, to discover this terrible secret. And the little boy—his dear little boy

—he could not look at him any more without enduring the terrible pains of that doubt, of being tortured by it to the very marrow of his bones. He would be obliged to live there, to remain in that house, near a child whom he might love and yet hate! Yes, he should certainly end by hating him. What torture! Oh! If he were sure that Limousin was George's father, he might, perhaps, grow calm, become accustomed to his misfortune and his pain; but ignorance was intolerable.

Not to know—to be always trying to find out, to be continually suffering, to kiss the child every moment, another man's child, to take him out for walks, to carry him, to caress him, to love him, and to think continually: "Perhaps he is not my child?" Wouldn't it be better not to see him, to abandon him,—to lose him in the streets, or to go away, far away, himself, so far away that he should never hear anything more spoken about, never!

He started when he heard the door open. His wife came. "I am hungry," she said; "are not you also, Limousin?"

He hesitated a little, and then said: "Yes, I am, upon my word." And she had the leg of mutton brought in again, while Parent asked himself: "Have they had dinner? Or are they late because they have had a lover's meeting?"

They both ate with a very good appetite. Henriette was very calm, but laughed and joked, and her husband watched her furtively. She had on a pink dressing gown trimmed with white lace, and her fair head, her white neck, and her plump hands stood out from that coquettish and perfumed dress, as from a

seashell edged with foam. What had she been doing all day with that man? Parent could see them kissing, and stammering out words of ardent love! How was it that he could not manage to know everything, to guess the whole truth, by looking at them, sitting side by side, opposite to him?

What fun they must be making of him, if he had been their dupe since the first day? Was it possible to make a fool of a man, of a worthy man, because his father had left him a little money? Why could one not see these things in people's souls? How was it that nothing revealed to upright souls the deceit of infamous hearts? How was it that voices had the same sound for adoring as for lying—why was a false, deceptive look the same as a sincere one? And he watched them, waiting to catch a gesture, a word, an intonation. Then suddenly he thought: "I will surprise them this evening," and he said: "My dear, as I have dismissed Julie, I will see about getting another this very day, and I shall go out immediately to procure one by to-morrow morning, so I may not be in until late."

"Very well," she replied; "go, I shall not stir from here. Limousin will keep me company. We will wait for you." And then, turning to the maid, she said: "You had better put George to bed, and then you can clear away and go up to your own room."

Parent had got up; he was unsteady on his legs, dazed and giddy, and saying: "I shall see you again later on," he went out, holding on to the wall, for the floor seemed to roll, like a ship. George had been carried out by his nurse, while Henriette and Limousin went into the drawing-room.

As soon as the door was shut, he said: "You must be mad, surely, to torment your husband as you do." She immediately turned on him: "Ah! Do you know that I think the habit you have got into lately, of looking upon Parent as a martyr, is very unpleasant."

Limousin threw himself into an easy-chair, and crossed his legs: "I am not setting him up as a martyr in the least, but I think that, situated as we are, it is ridiculous to defy this man as you do, from morning till night."

She took a cigarette from the mantelpiece, lighted it, and replied: "But I do not defy him, quite the contrary; only, he irritates me by his stupidity, and I treat him as he deserves."

Limousin continued impatiently: "What you are doing is very foolish! However, all women are alike. Look here: Parent is an excellent, kind fellow, stupidly confiding and good, who never interferes with us, who does not suspect us for a moment, who leaves us quite free and undisturbed, whenever we like, and you do all you can to put him into a rage and to spoil our life."

She turned to him: "I say, you worry me. You are a coward, like all other men are! You are frightened of that poor creature!" He immediately jumped up, and said, furiously: "I should like to know what he does, and why you are so set against him? Does he make you unhappy? Does he beat you? Does he deceive you and go with another woman? No, it is really too bad to make him suffer, merely because he is too kind, and to hate him, merely because you are unfaithful to him."

She went up to Limousin, and looking him full in the face, she said: "And you reproach me with deceiving him? You? You? What a filthy heart you must have?"

He felt rather ashamed, and tried to defend himself: "I am not reproaching you, my dear, I am only asking you to treat your husband gently, because we both of us require him to trust us. I think that you ought to see that."

They were close together—he, tall, dark, with long whiskers, and the rather vulgar manners of a good-looking man, who is very well satisfied with himself; she, small, fair, and pink, a little Parisian, half shopkeeper, half one of those girls of easy virtue, born in a shop, brought up at its door to entice customers by her looks, and married, accidentally, in consequence, to a simple, unsophisticated man, who saw her outside the door every morning when he went out, and every evening when he came home.

"But do you not understand, you great booby," she said, "that I hate him just because he married me, because he bought me, in fact, because everything that he says and does, everything that he thinks, reacts on my nerves? He exasperates me every moment by his stupidity, which you call kindness—by his dullness, which you call his confidence, and then, above all, because he is my husband, instead of you! I feel him between us, although he does not interfere with us much. And then? And then? No, after all, it is too idiotic of him not to guess anything! I wish he would at any rate be a little jealous. There are moments when I feel inclined to say to him: 'Don't you see, you stupid fool, that Paul is my lover?'"

Limousin began to laugh: "Meanwhile, it would be a good thing if you were to keep quiet, and not disturb our life."

"Oh! I shall not disturb it, you may be sure! There is nothing to fear, with such a fool. But it is quite incomprehensible that you cannot understand how hateful he is to me, how he irritates me. You always seem to like him, and you shake hands with him cordially. Men are very surprising at times."

"One must know how to dissimulate, my dear."

"It is no question of dissimulation, but of feeling. One might think that, when you men deceive another, you liked him all the more on that account, while we women hate a man from the moment that we have betrayed him."

"I do not see why I should hate an excellent fellow, because I love his wife."

"You do not see it? You do not see it? You, all of you, are wanting in that fineness of feeling! However, that is one of those things which one feels, and which one cannot express. And then, moreover, one ought not. No, you would not understand, it is quite useless! You men have no delicacy of feeling."

And smiling, with the gentle contempt of a debauched woman, she put both her hands on to his shoulders and held up her lips to him, and he stooped down and clasped her closely in his arms, and their lips met. And as they stood in front of the mirror, another couple exactly like them, embraced behind the clock.

They had heard nothing—neither the noise of the key, nor the creaking of the door, but suddenly Henriette, with a loud cry, pushed Limousin away with

both her arms, and they saw Parent who was looking at them, livid with rage, without his shoes on, and his hat over his forehead. He looked at them, one after the other, with a quick glance of his eyes without moving his head. He seemed possessed, and then, without saying a word, he threw himself on Limousin, seized him as if he were going to strangle him, and flung him into the opposite corner of the room so violently, that the lover lost his balance, and clutching at the air with his hands, banged his head against the wall.

But when Henriette saw that her husband was going to murder her lover, she threw herself on to Parent, seized him by the neck, and digging her ten delicate and rosy fingers into his neck, she squeezed him so tightly, with all the vigor of a desperate woman, that the blood spurted out under her nails, and she bit his shoulder, as if she wished to tear it with her teeth. Parent, half-strangled and choked, loosened his hold on Limousin in order to shake off his wife, who was hanging on to his neck; and putting his arms round her waist, he flung her also to the other end of the drawing-room.

Then, as his passion was short-lived, like that of most good-tempered men, and as his strength was soon exhausted, he remained standing between the two, panting, worn out, not knowing what to do next. His brute fury had expended itself in that effort, like the froth of a bottle of champagne, and his unwonted energy ended in a want of breath. As soon as he could speak, however, he said: "Go away—both of you—immediately—go away!"

Limousin remained motionless in his corner,

against the wall, too startled to understand anything as yet, too frightened to move a finger; while Henriette, with her hands resting on a small, round table, her head bent forward, with her hair hanging down, the bodice of her dress unfastened and bosom bare, waited like a wild animal which is about to spring. Parent went on, in a stronger voice: "Go away immediately. Get out of the house!"

His wife, however, seeing that he had got over his first exasperation, grew bolder, drew herself up, took two steps toward him, and grown almost insolent already, she said: "Have you lost your head? What is the matter with you? What is the meaning of this unjustifiable violence?" But he turned toward her, and raising his fist to strike her, he stammered out: "Oh! Oh! this is too much—too much! I heard everything! Everything! Do you understand? Everything! you wretch—you wretch; you are two wretches! Get out of the house—both of you! Immediately—or I shall kill you! Leave the house!"

She saw that it was all over, and that he knew everything, that she could not prove her innocence, and that she must comply, but all her impudence had returned to her, and her hatred for the man, which was aroused now, drove her to audacity, making her feel the need of bravado, and of defying him. So she said in a clear voice: "Come, Limousin, as he is going to turn me out of doors, I will go to your lodgings with you."

But Limousin did not move; and Parent, in a fresh access of rage cried out: "Go, will you!—go, you wretches!—or else!—or else!" and he seized a chair and whirled it over his head.

Then Henriette walked quickly across the room, took her lover by the arm, dragged him from the wall, to which he appeared fixed, and led him toward the door, saying: "Do come, my friend. You see that the man is mad. Do come!"

As she went out, she turned round to her husband, trying to think of something that she could do, something that she could invent to wound him to the heart as she left the house. An idea struck her, one of those venomous deadly ideas in which all a woman's perfidy shows itself, and she said resolutely: "I am going to take my child with me."

Parent was stupefied and stammered: "Your—your—child? You dare to talk of your child? You venture—you venture to ask for your child—after—after— Oh! oh! that is too much! Go, you horrid wretch! Go!" She went up to him again, almost smiling, avenged already, and defying him, standing close to him, and face to face, she said: "I want my child, and you have no right to keep him, because he is not yours. Do you understand? He is not yours—he is Limousin's."

And Parent cried out in bewilderment: "You lie—you lie—you wretch!"

But she continued: "You fool! Everybody knows it, except you. I tell you, this is his father. You need only look at him, to see it—"

Parent staggered back from her, and then he suddenly turned round, took a candle and rushed into the next room. Almost immediately, however, he returned, carrying little George wrapped up in his bedclothes, and the child, who had been suddenly awakened, was crying from fright. Parent threw him

into his wife's arms, and then, without saying anything more he pushed her roughly out, toward the stairs, where Limousin was waiting, from motives of prudence.

Then he shut the door again, double-locked it, and bolted it, and he had scarcely got into the drawing-room, when he fell full length on the floor.

II.

Parent lived alone, quite alone. During the five weeks that followed their separation, the feeling of surprise at his new life prevented him from thinking much. He had resumed his bachelor life, his habits of lounging about, and he took his meals at a restaurant, as he had done formerly. As he had wished to avoid any scandal, he made his wife an allowance, which was settled by their lawyers. By degrees, however, the thoughts of the child began to haunt him. Often, when he was at home alone at night, he suddenly thought he heard George calling out "Papa," and his heart would begin to beat. One night he got up quickly and opened the door to see whether, by chance, the child might have returned, like dogs or pigeons do. Why should a child have less instinct than an animal?

After finding that he was mistaken, he went and sat down in his armchair again and thought of the boy. Finally he thought of him for hours, and whole days. It was not only a moral, but still more a physical obsession, a nervous longing to kiss him, to hold and fondle him, to take him on to his knees and

dance him. He felt the child's little arms around his neck, the little mouth pressing a kiss on his beard, the soft hair tickling his cheeks, and the remembrance of all those childish ways made him suffer like the desire for some loved woman who has run away. Twenty or a hundred times a day he asked himself the question, whether he was or was not George's father, and at night, especially, he indulged in interminable speculations on the point, and almost before he was in bed. Every night he recommenced the same series of despairing arguments.

After his wife's departure, he had at first not felt the slightest doubt; certainly the child was Limousin's, but by degrees he began to waver. Henriette's words could not be of any value. She had merely braved him, and tried to drive him to desperation, and calmly weighing the *pros* and *cons*, there seemed to be every chance that she had lied, though perhaps only Limousin could tell the truth. But how was he to find it out, how could he question him or persuade him to confess the real facts?

Sometimes Parent would get up in the middle of the night, fully determined to go and see Limousin and to beg him, to offer him anything he wanted, to put an end to this intolerable misery. Then he would go back to bed in despair, reflecting that her lover would, no doubt, also lie! He would in fact be sure to lie, in order to avoid losing the child, if he were really his father. What could he, Parent, do then? Absolutely nothing!

And he began to feel sorry that he had thus suddenly brought about the crisis, that he had not taken time for reflection, that he had not waited and dis-

simulated for a month or two, so as to find out for himself. He ought to have pretended to suspect nothing, and have allowed them to betray themselves at their leisure. It would have been enough for him, to see the other kiss the child, to guess and to understand. A friend does not kiss a child as a father does. He should have watched them behind the doors. Why had he not thought of that? If Limousin, when left alone with George, had not at once taken him up, clasped him in his arms and kissed him passionately, if he had looked on indifferently while he was playing, without taking any notice of him, no doubt or hesitation could have been possible; in that case he would not have been the father, he would not have thought that he was, would not have felt that he was. Thus Parent would have kept the child, while he got rid of the mother, and he would have been happy, perfectly happy.

He tossed about in bed, hot and unhappy, trying to recollect Limousin's ways with the child. But he could not remember anything suspicious, not a gesture, not a look, neither word nor caress. And then the child's mother took very little notice of him; if she had had him by her lover, she would, no doubt, have loved him more.

They had, therefore, separated him from his son, out of vengeance, from cruelty, to punish him for having surprised them, and he made up his mind to go the next morning and obtain the magistrate's assistance to gain possession of George, but almost as soon as he had formed that resolution, he felt assured of the contrary. From the moment that Limousin had been Henriette's lover, her adored

lover, she would certainly have given herself up to him, from the very first, with that ardor of self-abandonment which belongs to women who love. The cold reserve which she had always shown in her intimate relations with him, Parent, was surely also an obstacle to her bearing him a son.

In that case he would be claiming, he would take with him, constantly keep and look after, the child of another man. He would not be able to look at him, kiss him, hear him say "Papa" without being struck and tortured by the thought, "He is not my child." He was going to condemn himself to that torture, and that wretched life every moment! No, it would be better to live alone, to grow old alone, and to die alone.

And every day and every night, these dreadful doubts and sufferings, which nothing could calm or end, would recommence. Especially did he dread the darkness of the evening, the melancholy feeling of the twilight. A flood of sorrow would invade his heart, a torrent of despair, which threatened to overwhelm him and drive him mad. He was as frightened of his own thoughts as men are of criminals, and he fled before them as one does from wild beasts. Above all things he feared his empty, dark, horrible dwelling, and the deserted streets, in which, here and there, a gas lamp flickers, where the isolated foot passenger whom one hears in the distance seems to be a night-prowler, and makes one walk faster or slower, according to whether he is coming toward you or following you.

And in spite of himself, and by instinct, Parent went in the direction of the broad, well-lighted, pop-

ulous streets. The light and the crowd attracted him, occupied his mind and distracted his thoughts, and when he was tired walking aimlessly about among the moving crowd, when he saw the foot passengers becoming more scarce, and the pavements less crowded, the fear of solitude and silence drove him into some large *café* full of drinkers and of light. He went there as a fly comes to a candle; he used to sit down at one of the little round tables and ask for a *bock*,* which he used to drink slowly, feeling uneasy every time that a customer got up to go. He would have liked to take him by the arm, hold him back and beg him to stay a little longer, so much did he dread the time when the waiter would come up to him and say angrily: "Come, Monsieur, it is closing time!"

Every evening he would stop till the very last. He saw them carry in the tables, turn out the gas jets one by one, except his and that at the counter. He looked unhappily at the cashier counting the money and locking it up in the drawer, and then he went, being usually pushed out by the waiters, who murmured: "Another one who has too much! One would think he had no place to sleep in."

And each night as soon as he was alone in the dark street, he began to think of George again, and to rack his brains in trying to discover whether or not he was this child's father.

He thus got into the habit of going to the beer houses, where the continual elbowing of the drinkers brings you in contact with a familiar and silent

* Glass of Bavarian beer.

public, where the clouds of tobacco smoke lull disquietude, while the heavy beer dulls the mind and calms the heart. He almost lived there. He was scarcely up, before he went there to find people to occupy his looks and his thoughts, and soon, as he became too listless to move, he took his meals there. About twelve o'clock he used to rap on the marble table, and the waiter would quickly bring a plate, a glass, a table napkin, and his lunch, when he had ordered it. When he had finished, he would slowly drink his cup of black coffee, with his eyes fixed on the decanter of brandy, which would soon procure him an hour or two of forgetfulness. First of all he would dip his lips into the cognac, as if to get the flavor of it with the tip of his tongue. Then he would throw his head back and pour it into his mouth, drop by drop, and turn the strong liquor over on his palate, his gums, and the mucous membrane of his cheeks; then he would swallow it slowly, to feel it going down his throat, and into his stomach.

Thus, after every meal, he, during more than an hour, sipped three or four small glasses of brandy which stupefied him by degrees; then, having drunk it, he used to raise himself up on the seat covered with red velvet, pull his trousers up, and his waistcoat down, so as to cover the linen which appeared between the two, draw down his shirt cuffs and take up the newspapers again, which he had already read in the morning, and read them all through again, from beginning to end. Between four and five o'clock he would go for a walk on the boulevards, to get a little fresh air, as he used to say, and then come back to the seat which had been reserved for

him, and ask for his absinthe. He used to talk to the regular customers, whose acquaintance he had made. They discussed the news of the day, and political events, and that carried him on till dinner-time, and he spent the evening as he had the afternoon, until it was time to close.

It was a terrible moment for him, when he was obliged to go out into the dark, and into the empty room full of dreadful recollections, of horrible thoughts, and of mental agony. He no longer saw any of his old friends, none of his relations, nobody who might remind him of his past life. But as his apartments were a hell to him, he took a room in a large hotel, a good room on the ground floor, so as to see the passers-by. He was no longer alone in that great building; he felt people swarming round him, he heard voices in the adjoining rooms, and when his former sufferings revived at the sight of his bed which was turned back, and of his solitary fireplace, he went out into the wide passages and walked up and down them like a sentinel, before all the closed doors, and looked sadly at the shoes standing in couples outside each, women's little boots by the side of men's thick ones, and he thought that no doubt all these people were happy, and were sleeping sweetly side by side or in each other's arms, in their warm beds.

Five years passed thus; five miserable years with no other events except from time to time a passing love affair. But one day when he was taking his usual walk between the Madeleine and the Rue Drouot, he suddenly saw a lady, whose bearing struck him. A tall gentleman and a child were with her,

and all three were walking in front of him. He asked himself where he had seen them before, when suddenly he recognized a movement of her hand: it was his wife, his wife with Limousin and his child, his little George.

His heart beat as if it would suffocate him, but he did not stop, for he wished to see them and he followed them. They looked like a family of the better middle class. Henriette was leaning on Paul's arm and speaking to him in a low voice and looking at him sideways occasionally. Parent saw her side face, and recognized its graceful outlines, the movements of her lips, her smile, and her caressing looks, but the child chiefly took up his attention. How tall and strong he was! Parent could not see his face, but only his long, fair curls. That tall boy with bare legs, who was walking by his mother's side like a little man, was George.

He saw them suddenly all three, as they stopped in front of a shop. Limousin had grown very gray, had aged, and was thinner; his wife, on the contrary, was as young looking as ever, and had grown stouter; George he would not have recognized, he was so different to what he had been formerly.

They went on again, and Parent followed them, then walked on quickly, passed them and then turned round, so as to meet them face to face. As he passed the child he felt a mad longing to take him into his arms and run off with him, and he knocked against him, accidentally as it were. The boy turned round and looked at the clumsy man angrily, and Parent went off hastily, struck and hurt by the look. He slunk off like a thief, seized by a horrible fear lest he

should have been seen and recognized by his wife and her lover, and he went to his *café* without stopping, fell breathless into his chair, and that evening he drank three absinthes.

For four months he felt the pain of that meeting in his heart. Every night he saw the three again, happy and tranquil, father, mother, and child walking on the boulevard before going in to dinner, and that new vision effaced the old one. It was another matter, another hallucination now, and also a fresh pain. Little George, his little George, the child he had so much loved and so often kissed formerly, disappeared in the far distance and he saw a new one, like a brother of the first, a little boy with bare legs, who did not know him! He suffered terribly at that thought. The child's love was dead; there was no bond between them; the child would not have held out his arms when he saw him. He had even looked at him angrily.

Then by degrees he grew calmer, his mental torture diminished, the image that had appeared to his eyes and which haunted his nights became more indistinct and less frequent. He began once more to live like everybody else, like all those idle people who drink beer off marble-topped tables and wear out the seats of their trousers on the threadbare velvet of the couches.

He grew old amid the smoke from pipes, lost his hair under the gas lights, looked upon his weekly bath, on his fortnightly visit to the barber's to have his hair cut, and on the purchase of a new coat or hat, as an event. When he got to his *café* after buying a new hat he used to look at himself in the

glass for a long time before sitting down, and would take it off and put it on again several times following, and at last ask his friend, the lady at the bar, who watched him with interest, whether she thought it suited him.

Two or three times a year he went to the theater, and in the summer he sometimes spent his evenings at one of the open air concerts in the Champs-Elysées. He brought back from them some airs which ran in his head for several weeks, and which he even hummed, beating time with his foot, while he was drinking his beer, and so the years followed each other, slow, monotonous, and long, because they were quite uneventful.

He did not feel them glide past him. He went on toward death without fear or agitation, sitting at a table in a *café*, and only the great glass against which he rested his head, which was every day becoming balder, reflected the ravages of time, which flies and devours men, poor men.

He only very rarely now thought of the terrible drama which had wrecked his life, for twenty years had passed since that terrible evening, but the life he had led since then had worn him out, and the landlord of his *café* would often say to him: "You ought to pull yourself together a little, Monsieur Parent; you should get some fresh air and go into the country; I assure you that you have changed very much within the last few months." And when his customer had gone out, he used to say to the barmaid: "That poor Monsieur Parent is booked for another world; it is no good never to go out of Paris. Advise him to go out of town for a day

occasionally, he has confidence in you. It is nice weather, and will do him good." And she, full of pity and good-will for such a regular customer, said to Parent every day: "Come, Monsieur, make up your mind to get a little fresh air, it is so charming in the country when the weather is fine. Oh! If I could, I would spend my life there."

And she told him her dreams, the simple and poetical dreams of all the poor girls who are shut up from one year's end to the other in a shop and who see the noisy life of the streets go by while they think of the calm and pleasant life in the country, under the trees, under the bright sun shining on the meadows, of deep woods and clear rivers, of cows lying in the grass and of all the different flowers, blue, red, yellow, purple, lilac, pink, and white, which are so pretty, so fresh, so sweet, all the wild flowers which one picks as one walks.

She liked to speak to him frequently of her continual, unrealized and unrealizable longing, and he, an old man without hope, was fond of listening to her, and used to go and sit near the counter to talk to Mademoiselle Zoé and to discuss the country with her. Then, by degrees he was seized by a vague desire to go just once and see whether it was really so pleasant there, as she said, outside the walls of the great city, and so one morning he said to her: "Do you know where one can get a good lunch in the neighborhood of Paris?"

"Go to the 'Terrace' at Saint-Germain."

He had been there formerly, just after he had got engaged, and so he made up his mind to go

there again, and he chose a Sunday, without any special reason, but merely because people generally do go out on Sundays, even when they have nothing to do all the week. So one Sunday morning he went to Saint-Germain. It was at the beginning of July, on a very bright and hot day. Sitting by the door of the railway-carriage, he watched the trees and the strangely built little houses in the outskirts of Paris fly past. He felt low-spirited, and vexed at having yielded to that new longing, and at having broken through his usual habits. The view, which was continually changing, and always the same, wearied him. He was thirsty; he would have liked to get out at every station and sit down in the *café* which he saw outside and drink a *bock* or two, and then take the first train back to Paris. And then, the journey seemed very long to him. He used to remain sitting for whole days, as long as he had the same motionless objects before his eyes, but he found it very trying and fatiguing to remain sitting while he was being whirled along, and to see the whole country fly by, while he himself was motionless.

However, he found the Seine interesting, every time he crossed it. Under the bridge at Chatou he saw some skiffs going at great pace under the vigorous strokes of the bare-armed oarsmen, and he thought: "There are some fellows who are certainly enjoying themselves!" And then the train entered the tunnel just before you get to the station at Saint-Germain, and soon stopped at the arrival platform, where Parent got out, and walked slowly, for he already felt tired, toward the Terrace, with

his hands behind his back, and when he got to the iron balustrade, he stopped to look at the distant horizon.

The vast plain spread out before him like the sea, green, and studded with large villages, almost as populous as towns. White roads crossed it, and it was well wooded in places; the ponds at Vesinet glistened like plates of silver, and the distant ridges of Sannois and Argenteuil were covered with light, bluish mist, so that they could scarcely be distinguished. The sun bathed the whole landscape in its full warm light, and the Seine, which twined like an endless serpent through the plain, flowed round the villages and along the slopes. Parent inhaled the warm breeze which seemed to make his heart young again, to enliven his spirits, and to vivify his blood, and said to himself: "It is very nice here."

Then he went on a few steps, and stopped again to look about him, and the utter misery of his existence seemed to be brought out into full relief by the intense light which inundated the country. He saw his twenty years of *café*-life, dull, monotonous, heart-breaking. He might have traveled like others did, have gone among foreigners, to unknown countries beyond the sea, have interested himself somewhat in everything which other men are passionately devoted to, in arts and sciences, he might have enjoyed life in a thousand forms, that mysterious life which is either charming or painful, constantly changing, always inexplicable and strange.

Now, however, it was too late. He would go on drinking *bock* after *bock* until he died, without any family, without friends, without hope, without any

curiosity about anything, and he was seized with a feeling of misery and a wish to run away, to hide himself in Paris, in his *café* and his befuddlement! All the thoughts, all the dreams, all the desires which are dormant in the sloth of stagnating hearts, had reawakened, brought to life by those rays of sunlight on the plain.

He felt that if he were to remain there any longer, he should lose his head, and so he made haste to get to the Pavilion Henri IV for lunch, to try and forget his troubles under the influence of wine and alcohol, and at any rate to have some one to speak to.

He took a small table in one of the arbors, from which one can see all the surrounding country, ordered his lunch and asked to be served at once. Then some more people arrived and sat down at tables near him and he felt more comfortable; he was no longer alone. Three persons were lunching near him, and he looked at them two or three times without seeing them clearly, as one looks at total strangers. But suddenly a woman's voice sent a shiver through him which seemed to penetrate to his very marrow. "George," it had said, "will you carve the chicken?" Another voice replied: "Yes, mamma."

Parent looked up, and he understood, he guessed immediately who those people were! He should certainly not have known them again. His wife had grown quite white and very stout, an old, serious, respectable lady, and she held her head forward as she ate, for fear of spotting her dress, although she had a table napkin tucked under her chin. George had become a man; he had a slight

beard, that unequal and almost colorless beard which fringes the cheeks of youths. He wore a high hat, a white waistcoat, and a monocle—because it looked dandified, no doubt. Parent looked at him in astonishment! Was that George, his son? No, he did not know that young man; there could be nothing in common between them. Limousin had his back to him, and was eating, with his shoulders rather bent.

Well, all three of them seemed happy and satisfied; they came and dined in the country, at well-known restaurants. They had had a calm and pleasant existence, a family existence in a warm and comfortable house, filled with all those trifles which make life agreeable, with affection, with all those tender words which people exchange continually when they love each other. They had lived thus, thanks to him, Parent, on his money, after having deceived him, robbed him, ruined him! They had condemned him, the innocent, the simple-minded, the jovial man to all the miseries of solitude, to that abominable life which he had led between the pavement and the counter, to every moral torture and every physical misery! They had made him a useless being, who was lost and wretched among other people, a poor old man without any pleasures, or anything to look forward to, and who hoped for nothing from anyone. For him, the world was empty, because he loved nothing in the world. He might go among other nations or go about the streets, go into all the houses in Paris, open every room, but he would not find the beloved face, the face of wife or child, that he was in search of, which smiles when it sees you, behind any door. And that idea worked upon him more than

any other, the idea of a door which one opens, to see and to embrace somebody behind it.

And that was the fault of those three wretches! the fault of that worthless woman, of that infamous friend, and of that tall, light-haired lad who put on insolent airs. Now, he felt as angry with the child as he did with the other two! Was he not Limousin's son? Would Limousin have kept him and loved him, otherwise? Would not Limousin very quickly have got rid of the mother and of the child if he had not felt sure that it was his, certainly his? Does anybody bring up other people's children? And now they were there, quite close to him, those three who had made him suffer so much.

Parent looked at them, irritated and excited at the recollection of all his sufferings and of his despair, and was especially exasperated at their placid and satisfied looks. He felt inclined to kill them, to throw his siphon of Seltzer water at them, to split open Limousin's head, which he every moment bent over his plate and raised up again immediately. And they continued to live like that, without cares or anxiety of any kind. No! no! That was really too much, after all! He would avenge himself, he would have his revenge now, on the spot, as he had them under his hand. But how? He tried to think of some means, he pictured such dreadful things as one reads of in the newspapers occasionally, but could not hit on anything practical. And he went on drinking to excite himself, to give himself courage not to allow such an occasion to escape him, as he should certainly not meet with it again.

Suddenly an idea struck him, a terrible idea, and

he left off drinking to mature it. A smile rose to his lips, and he murmured: "I have got them, I have got them. We will see; we will see."

A waiter asked him: "What would you like now, Monsieur?"

"Nothing. Coffee and cognac. The best." And he looked at them, as he sipped his brandy. There were too many people in the restaurant for what he wanted to do, so he would wait and follow them, for they would be sure to walk on the terrace or in the forest. When they had got a little distance off, he would join them, and then he would have his revenge, yes, he would have his revenge! It was certainly not too soon, after twenty-three years of suffering. Ah! They little guessed what was to happen to them.

They finished their luncheon slowly, and they talked in perfect security. Parent could not hear what they were saying, but he saw their calm movements, and his wife's face, especially, exasperated him. She had assumed a haughty air, the air of a stout, devout woman, of an irreproachably devout woman, sheathed in principles, iron-clad in virtue. Then they paid the bill and got up, and then he saw Limousin. He might have been taken for a retired diplomatist, for he looked a man of great importance with his soft, white whiskers, the tips of which fell on to the facings of his coat.

They went out. George was smoking a cigar and had his hat on one side, and Parent followed them. First of all they went up and down the terrace, and calmly admired the landscape, like people who have well satisfied their hunger, and then they went into

the forest, and Parent rubbed his hands and followed them at a distance, hiding himself, so as not to excite their suspicion too soon. They walked slowly, enjoying the fresh green foliage, and the warm air. Henriette was holding Limousin's arm and walked upright at his side, like a wife who is contented, and proud of herself. George was cutting off the leaves with his stick, and occasionally jumped over the ditches by the roadside, like a fiery young horse ready to gallop off through the trees.

Parent came up to them by degrees, panting rather from excitement and fatigue, for he never walked now. He soon came up to them, but he was seized by fear, an inexplicable fear, and he passed them, so as to turn round and meet them face to face. He walked on, his heart beating, for he knew that they were just behind him now, and he said to himself: "Come, now is the time. Courage! courage! Now is the moment!"

He turned round. They were all three sitting on the grass, at the foot of a huge tree, and were still talking. He made up his mind, and came back rapidly, and then stopping in front of them in the middle of the road, he said abruptly, in a voice broken by emotion: "It is I! Here I am! I suppose you did not expect me?" They all three looked at him carefully, for they thought that he was mad, and he continued: "One might think that you did not know me again. Just look at me! I am Parent, Henri Parent. You did not expect me, eh? You thought it was all over, and that you would never see me again. Ah! But here I am once more, you see, and now we will have an explanation."

Henriette was terrified and hid her face in her hands, murmuring: "Oh! Good Heavens!" And seeing this stranger who seemed to be threatening his mother, George sprang up, ready to seize him by the collar, while Limousin, who was thunderstruck, looked at this specter in horror, who, after panting for a few moments, continued: "So now we will have an explanation; the proper moment for it has come! Ah! you deceived me, you condemned me to the life of a convict, and you thought that I should never catch you!"

But the young man took him by the shoulders and pushed him back: "Are you mad?" he asked. "What do you want? Go on your way immediately, or I shall give you a thrashing!" But Parent replied: "What do I want? I want to tell you who these people are." George, however, was in a rage and shook him; was even going to strike him, but the other said: "Just let me go. I am your father. There, look whether they recognize me now, the wretches!" And the alarmed young man removed his hands, and turned to his mother, while Parent, as soon as he was released, went toward her.

"Well," he said, "tell him who I am, you! Tell him that my name is Henri Parent; that I am his father because his name is George Parent; because you are my wife, because you are all three living on my money, on the allowance of ten thousand francs* which I have made you, since I drove you out of my house. Will you tell him also why I drove you out? Because I surprised you with this beggar, this wretch,

*About $2000.

your lover! Tell him what I was, an honorable man, whom you married for my money, and whom you deceived from the very first day. Tell him who you are, and who I am."

He stammered and panted for breath, in his rage, and the woman exclaimed in a heartrending voice: "Paul, Paul, stop him; make him be quiet; do not let him say this before my son!"

Limousin had also got up, and he said in a quite low voice: "Hold your tongue! Hold your tongue! Do understand what you are doing!"

But Parent continued furiously: "I quite know what I am doing, and that is not all. There is one thing that I will know, something that has tormented me for twenty years."

And then turning to George, who was leaning against a tree in consternation, he said: "Listen to me. When she left my house, she thought it was not enough to have deceived me, but she also wanted to drive me to despair. You were my only consolation, and she took you with her, swearing that I was not your father, but that he was your father! Was she lying! I do not know, and I have been asking myself the question for the last twenty years."

He went close up to her, tragic and terrible, and pulling away her hands with which she had covered her face he continued: "Well, I call upon you now to tell me which of us two is the father of this young man; he or I, your husband or your lover. Come! Come! tell us." Limousin rushed at him, but Parent pushed him back, and sneering in his fury he said: "Ah! you are brave now! You are braver than you were the day you ran out of doors because I was

going to half murder you. Very well! If she will not reply, tell me yourself. You ought to know as well as she. Tell me, are you this young fellow's father? Come! Come! Tell me!"

Then he turned to his wife again: "If you will not tell me, at any rate tell your son. He is a man, now, and he has the right to know who is his father. I do not know, and I never did know, never, never! I cannot tell you, my boy." He seemed to be losing his senses, his voice grew shrill and he worked his arms about as if he had an epileptic attack. "Come! Give me an answer. She does not know. I will make a bet that she does not know. No—she does not know, by Jove! She used to go to bed with both of us! Ha! ha! ha! Nobody knows—nobody. How can one know such things? You will not know either, my boy, you will not know any more than I do—never. Look here. Ask her—you will find that she does not know. I do not know either. You can choose—yes, you can choose—him or me. Choose. Good evening. It is all over. If she makes up her mind to tell you, come and let me know, will you, I am living at the Hôtel des Continents. I should be glad to know. Good evening; I hope you will enjoy yourselves very much."

And he went away gesticulating and talking to himself under the tall trees, into the empty, cool air, which was full of the smell of the sap. He did not turn round to look at them, but went straight on, walking under the stimulus of his rage, under a storm of passion, with that one fixed idea in his mind, and presently he found himself outside the station. A train was about to start and he got in.

During the journey, his anger calmed down, he regained his senses and returned to Paris, astonished at his own boldness, and feeling as full of aches and fatigue, as if he had broken some bones, but nevertheless he went to have a *bock* at his *café*.

When she saw him come in, Mademoiselle Zoé was surprised and said: "What! back already? Are you tired?"

"I am tired—very tired. You know, when one is not used to going out—but I have done with it. I shall not go into the country again. I had better have stopped here. For the future, I shall not stir out again."

But she could not persuade him to tell her about his little excursion, although she wanted very much to hear all about it, and for the first time in his life he got thoroughly drunk that night, and had to be carried home.

USELESS BEAUTY

A VERY elegant victoria, with two beautiful black horses, was drawn up in front of the mansion. It was a day in the latter end of June, about half past five in the afternoon, and the sun shone warm and bright into the large courtyard.

The Countess de Mascaret came down just as her husband, who was coming home, appeared in the carriage entrance. He stopped for a few moments to look at his wife and grew rather pale. She was very beautiful, graceful, and distinguished looking, with her long oval face, her complexion like gilt ivory, her large gray eyes, and her black hair; and she got into her carriage without looking at him, without even seeming to have noticed him, with such a particularly high-bred air, that the furious jealousy by which he had been devoured for so long again gnawed at his heart. He went up to her and said: "You are going for a drive?"

She merely replied disdainfully: "You see I am!"

"In the Bois de Boulogne?"

"Most probably."

"May I come with you?"

"The carriage belongs to you."

Without being surprised at the tone of voice in which she answered him, he got in and sat down by his wife's side, and said: "Bois de Boulogne." The footman jumped up by the coachman's side, and the horses as usual pawed the ground and shook their heads until they were in the street. Husband and wife sat side by side, without speaking. He was thinking how to begin a conversation, but she maintained such an obstinately hard look, that he did not venture to make the attempt. At last, however, he cunningly, accidentally as it were, touched the Countess's gloved hand with his own, but she drew her arm away, with a movement which was so expressive of disgust, that he remained thoughtful, in spite of his usual authoritative and despotic character. "Gabrielle!" said he at last.

"What do you want?"

"I think you are looking adorable."

She did not reply, but remained lying back in the carriage, looking like an irritated queen. By that time they were driving up the Champs-Elysées, toward the Arc de Triomphe. That immense monument, at the end of the long avenue, raised its colossal arch against the red sky, and the sun seemed to be sinking on to it, showering fiery dust on it from the sky.

The streams of carriages, with the sun reflecting from the bright, plated harness and the shining lamps, were like a double current flowing, one toward the

town and one toward the wood, and the Count de Mascaret continued: "My dear Gabrielle!"

Then, unable to bear it any longer, she replied in an exasperated voice: "Oh! do leave me in peace, pray; I am not even at liberty to have my carriage to myself, now." He, however, pretended not to hear her, and continued: "You have never looked so pretty as you do to-day."

Her patience was decidedly at an end, and she replied with irrepressible anger: "You are wrong to notice it, for I swear to you that I will never have anything to do with you in that way again." He was stupefied and agitated, and his violent nature gaining the upper hand, he exclaimed: "What do you mean by that?" in such a manner as revealed rather the brutal master than the amorous man. But she replied in a low voice, so that the servants might not hear, amid the deafening noise of the wheels:

"Ah! What do I mean by that? What do I mean by that? Now I recognize you again! Do you want me to tell everything?"

"Yes."

"Everything that has been on my heart, since I have been the victim of your terrible selfishness?"

He had grown red with surprise and anger, and he growled between his closed teeth: "Yes, tell me everything."

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a big, red beard, a handsome man, a nobleman, a man of the world, who passed as a perfect husband and an excellent father, and now for the first time since they had started she turned toward him, and looked him

full in the face: "Ah! You will hear some disagreeable things, but you must know that I am prepared for everything, that I fear nothing, and you less than anyone, to-day."

He also was looking into her eyes, and already was shaking with passion; then he said in a low voice: "You are mad."

"No, but I will no longer be the victim of the hateful penalty of maternity, which you have inflicted on me for eleven years! I wish to live like a woman of the world, as I have the right to do, as all women have the right to do."

He suddenly grew pale again, and stammered: "I do not understand you."

"Oh! yes; you understand me well enough. It is now three months since I had my last child, and as I am still very beautiful, and as, in spite of all your efforts you cannot spoil my figure, as you just now perceived, when you saw me on the outside flight of steps, you think it is time that I should become *enceinte* again."

"But you are talking nonsense!"

"No, I am not; I am thirty, and I have had seven children, and we have been married eleven years, and you hope that this will go on for ten years longer, after which you will leave off being jealous."

He seized her arm and squeezed it, saying: "I will not allow you to talk to me like that, for long."

"And I shall talk to you till the end, until I have finished all I have to say to you, and if you try to prevent me, I shall raise my voice so that the two servants, who are on the box, may hear. I only allowed you to come with me for that object, for I

have these witnesses, who will oblige you to listen to me, and to contain yourself; so now, pay attention to what I say. I have always felt an antipathy for you, and I have always let you see it, for I have never lied, Monsieur. You married me in spite of myself; you forced my parents, who were in embarrassed circumstances, to give me to you, because you were rich, and they obliged me to marry you, in spite of my tears.

"So you bought me, and as soon as I was in your power, as soon as I had become your companion, ready to attach myself to you, to forget your coercive and threatening proceedings, in order that I might only remember that I ought to be a devoted wife and to love you as much as it might be possible for me to love you, you became jealous — you — as no man has ever been before, with the base, ignoble jealousy of a spy, which was as degrading for you as it was for me. I had not been married eight months, when you suspected me of every perfidiousness, and you even told me so. What a disgrace! And as you could not prevent me from being beautiful, and from pleasing people, from being called in drawing-rooms, and also in the newspapers, one of the most beautiful women in Paris, you tried everything you could think of to keep admirers from me, and you hit upon the abominable idea of making me spend my life in a constant state of motherhood, until the time when I should disgust every man. Oh! do not deny it! I did not understand it for some time, but then I guessed it. You even boasted about it to your sister, who told me of it, for she is fond of me and was disgusted at your boorish coarseness.

"Ah! Remember our struggles, doors smashed in, and locks forced! For eleven years you have condemned me to the existence of a brood mare. Then as soon as I was pregnant, you grew disgusted with me, and I saw nothing of you for months, and I was sent into the country, to the family mansion, among fields and meadows, to bring forth my child. And when I reappeared, fresh, pretty, and indestructible, still seductive and constantly surrounded by admirers, hoping that at last I should live a little like a young rich woman who belongs to society, you were seized by jealousy again, and you recommenced to persecute me with that infamous and hateful desire from which you are suffering at this moment, by my side. And it is not the desire of possessing me—for I should never have refused myself to you—but it is the wish to make me unsightly.

"Besides this, that abominable and mysterious circumstance took place, which I was a long time in penetrating (but I grew acute by dint of watching your thoughts and actions). You attached yourself to your children with all the security which they gave you while I bore them in my womb. You felt affection for them, with all your aversion for me, and in spite of your ignoble fears, which were momentarily allayed by your pleasure in seeing me a mother.

"Oh! how often have I noticed that joy in you! I have seen it in your eyes and guessed it. You loved your children as victories, and not because they were of your own blood. They were victories over me, over my youth, over my beauty, over my charms, over the compliments which were paid me, and over those who whispered round me, without paying them

to me. And you are proud of them, you make a parade of them, you take them out for drives in your coach in the Bois de Boulogne, and you give them donkey rides at Montmorency. You take them to theatrical matinées so that you may be seen in the midst of them, and that people may say: 'What a kind father!' and that it may be repeated."

He had seized her wrist with savage brutality, and squeezed it so violently that she was quiet, though she nearly cried out with the pain. Then he said to her in a whisper:

"I love my children, do you hear? What you have just told me is disgraceful in a mother. But you belong to me; I am master—your master. I can exact from you what I like and when I like—and I have the law on my side."

He was trying to crush her fingers in the strong grip of his large, muscular hand, and she, livid with pain, tried in vain to free them from that vise which was crushing them; the agony made her pant, and the tears came into her eyes. "You see that I am the master, and the stronger," he said. And when he somewhat loosened his grip, she asked him: "Do you think that I am a religious woman?"

He was surprised and stammered: "Yes."

"Do you think that I could lie, if I swore to the truth of anything to you, before an altar on which Christ's body is?"

"No."

"Will you go with me to some church?"

"What for?"

"You shall see. Will you?"

"If you absolutely wish it, yes."

She raised her voice and said: "Philip!" And the coachman, bending down a little, without taking his eyes from his horses, seemed to turn his ear alone toward his mistress, who said: "Drive to St. Philip-du-Roule's." And the victoria, which had reached the entrance of the Bois de Boulogne, returned to Paris.

Husband and wife did not exchange a word during the drive. When the carriage stopped before the church, Madame de Mascaret jumped out, and entered it, followed by the Count, a few yards behind her. She went, without stopping, as far as the choir-screen, and falling on her knees at a chair, she buried her face in her hands. She prayed for a long time, and he, standing behind her, could see that she was crying. She wept noiselessly, like women do weep when they are in great and poignant grief. There was a kind of undulation in her body, which ended in a little sob, hidden and stifled by her fingers.

But Count de Mascaret thought that the situation was long drawn out, and he touched her on the shoulder. That contact recalled her to herself, as if she had been burned, and getting up, she looked straight into his eyes.

"This is what I have to say to you. I am afraid of nothing, whatever you may do to me. You may kill me if you like. One of your children is not yours, and one only; that I swear to you before God, who hears me here. That is the only revenge which was possible for me, in return for all your abominable male tyrannies, in return for the penal servitude of childbearing to which you have condemned me. Who was my lover? That you will never know! You may suspect everyone, but you will never find

out. I gave myself up to him, without love and without pleasure, only for the sake of betraying you, and he made me a mother. Which is his child? That also you will never know. I have seven; try and find out! I intended to tell you this later, for one cannot completely avenge oneself on a man by deceiving him, unless he knows it. You have driven me to confess it to-day; now I have finished."

She hurried through the church, toward the open door, expecting to hear behind her the quick steps of her husband whom she had defied, and to be knocked to the ground by a blow of his fist, but she heard nothing, and reached her carriage. She jumped into it at a bound, overwhelmed with anguish, and breathless with fear; she called out to the coachman, "Home!" and the horses set off at a quick trot.

II.

The Countess de Mascaret was waiting in her room for dinner time, like a criminal sentenced to death awaits the hour of his execution. What was he going to do? Had he come home? Despotic, passionate, ready for any violence as he was, what was he meditating, what had he made up his mind to do? There was no sound in the house, and every moment she looked at the clock. Her maid had come and dressed her for the evening, and had then left the room again. Eight o'clock struck; almost at the same moment there were two knocks at the door, and the butler came in and told her that dinner was ready.

"Has the Count come in?"

"Yes, Madame la Comtesse; he is in the dining-room."

For a moment she felt inclined to arm herself with a small revolver, which she had bought some weeks before, foreseeing the tragedy which was being rehearsed in her heart. But she remembered that all the children would be there, and she took nothing except a smelling-bottle. He rose somewhat ceremoniously from his chair. They exchanged a slight bow, and sat down. The three boys, with their tutor, Abbé Martin, were on her right, and the three girls, with Miss Smith, their English governess, were on her left. The youngest child, who was only three months old, remained upstairs with his nurse.

The Abbé said grace, as was usual when there was no company, for the children did not come down to dinner when there were guests present; then they began dinner. The Countess, suffering from emotion which she had not at all calculated upon, remained with her eyes cast down, while the Count scrutinized, now the three boys, and now the three girls with uncertain, unhappy looks, which traveled from one to the other. Suddenly, pushing his wineglass from him, it broke, and the wine was spilt on the table-cloth, and at the slight noise caused by this little accident, the Countess started up from her chair, and for the first time they looked at each other. Then, almost every moment, in spite of themselves, in spite of the irritation of their nerves caused by every glance, they did not cease to exchange looks, rapid as pistol shots.

The Abbé, who felt that there was some cause for

embarrassment which he could not divine, tried to get up a conversation, and started various subjects, but his useless efforts gave rise to no ideas and did not bring out a word. The Countess, with feminine tact and obeying the instincts of a woman of the world, tried to answer him two or three times, but in vain. She could not find words, in the perplexity of her mind, and her own voice almost frightened her in the silence of the large room, where nothing else was heard except the slight sound of plates and knives and forks.

Suddenly, her husband said to her, bending forward: "Here, amid your children, will you swear to me that what you told me just now is true?"

The hatred which was fermenting in her veins suddenly roused her, and replying to that question with the same firmness with which she had replied to his looks, she raised both her hands, the right pointing toward the boys and the left toward the girls, and said in a firm, resolute voice, and without any hesitation: "On the heads of my children, I swear that I have told you the truth."

He got up, and throwing his table napkin on to the table with an exasperated movement, turned round and flung his chair against the wall. Then he went out without another word, while she, uttering a deep sigh, as if after a first victory, went on in a calm voice: "You must not pay any attention to what your father has just said, my darlings; he was very much upset a short time ago, but he will be all right again, in a few days."

Then she talked with the Abbé and with Miss Smith, and had tender, pretty words for all her chil-

dren; those sweet spoiling mother's ways which unlock little hearts.

When dinner was over, she went into the drawing-room with all her little following. She made the elder ones chatter, and when their bedtime came she kissed them for a long time, and then went alone into her room.

She waited, for she had no doubt that he would come, and she made up her mind then, as her children were not with her, to defend her human flesh, as she defended her life as a woman of the world; and in the pocket of her dress she put the little loaded revolver which she had bought a few weeks before. The hours went by, the hours struck, and every sound was hushed in the house. Only the cabs continued to rumble through the streets, but their noise was only heard vaguely through the shuttered and curtained windows.

She waited, energetic and nervous, without any fear of him now, ready for anything, and almost triumphant, for she had found means of torturing him continually, during every moment of his life.

But the first gleams of dawn came in through the fringe at the bottom of her curtains, without his having come into her room, and then she awoke to the fact, much to her surprise that he was not coming. Having locked and bolted her door, for greater security, she went to bed at last, and remained there, with her eyes open, thinking, and barely understanding it all, without being able to guess what he was going to do.

When her maid brought her tea, she at the same time gave her a letter from her husband. He told

her that he was going to undertake a longish journey, and in a postscript he added that his lawyer would provide her with such money as she might require for her expenses.

III.

It was at the opera, between two of the acts in "Robert the Devil." In the stalls, the men were standing up, with their hats on, their waistcoats cut very low so as to show a large amount of white shirt front, in which the gold and precious stones of their studs glistened. They were looking at the boxes crowded with ladies in low dresses, covered with diamonds and pearls, women who seemed to expand like flowers in that illuminated hothouse, where the beauty of their faces and the whiteness of their shoulders seemed to bloom for inspection, in the midst of the music and of human voices.

Two friends, with their backs to the orchestra, were scanning those parterres of elegance, that exhibition of real or false charms, of jewels, of luxury, and of pretension which showed itself off all round the Grand Theater. One of them, Roger de Salnis, said to his companion, Bernard Grandin: "Just look how beautiful Countess de Mascaret still is."

Then the elder, in turn, looked through his opera glasses at a tall lady in a box opposite, who appeared to be still very young, and whose striking beauty seemed to appeal to men's eyes in every corner of the house. Her pale complexion, of an ivory tint, gave her the appearance of a statue, while a small,

diamond coronet glistened on her black hair like a cluster of stars.

When he had looked at her for some time, Bernard Grandin replied with a jocular accent of sincere conviction: "You may well call her beautiful!"

"How old do you think she is?"

"Wait a moment. I can tell you exactly, for I have known her since she was a child, and I saw her make her *début* into society when she was quite a girl. She is—she is—thirty—thirty-six."

"Impossible!"

"I am sure of it."

"She looks twenty-five."

"She has had seven children."

"It is incredible."

"And what is more, they are all seven alive, as she is a very good mother. I go to the house, which is a very quiet and pleasant one, occasionally, and she presents the phenomenon of the family in the midst of the world."

"How very strange! And have there never been any reports about her?"

"Never."

"But what about her husband? He is peculiar, is he not?"

"Yes and no. Very likely there has been a little drama between them, one of those little domestic dramas which one suspects, which one never finds out exactly, but which one guesses pretty nearly."

"What is it?"

"I do not know anything about it. Mascaret leads a very fast life now, after having been a model husband. As long as he remained a good spouse, he

had a shocking temper and was crabbed and easily took offense, but since he has been leading his present, rackety life, he has become quite indifferent; but one would guess that he has some trouble, a worm gnawing somewhere, for he has aged very much."

Thereupon the two friends talked philosophically for some minutes about the secret, unknowable troubles, which differences of character or perhaps physical antipathies, which were not perceived at first, give rise to in families. Then Roger de Salnis, who was still looking at Madame de Mascaret through his opera-glasses, said:

"It is almost incredible that that woman has had seven children!"

"Yes, in eleven years; after which, when she was thirty, she put a stop to her period of production in order to enter into the brilliant period of entertaining, which does not seem near coming to an end."

"Poor women!"

"Why do you pity them?"

"Why? Ah! my dear fellow, just consider! Eleven years of maternity, for such a woman! What a hell! All her youth, all her beauty, every hope of success, every poetical ideal of a bright life, sacrificed to that abominable law of reproduction which turns the normal woman into a mere machine for maternity."

"What would you have? It is only nature!"

"Yes, but I say that Nature is our enemy, that we must always fight against Nature, for she is continually bringing us back to an animal state. You may be sure that God has not put anything on this earth that is clean, pretty, elegant, or accessory to our

ideal, but the human brain has done it. It is we who have introduced a little grace, beauty, unknown charm, and mystery into creation by singing about it, interpreting it, by admiring it as poets, idealizing it as artists, and by explaining it as learned men who make mistakes, but who find ingenious reasons, some grace and beauty, some unknown charm and mystery in the various phenomena of nature.

"God only created coarse beings, full of the germs of disease, and who, after a few years of bestial enjoyment, grow old and infirm, with all the ugliness and all the want of power of human decrepitude. He only seems to have made them in order that they may reproduce their species in a repulsive manner, and then die like ephemeral insects. I said, *reproduce their species in a repulsive manner,* and I adhere to that expression. What is there as a matter of fact, more ignoble and more repugnant than that ridiculous act of the reproduction of living beings, against which all delicate minds always have revolted, and always will revolt? Since all the organs which have been invented by this economical and malicious Creator serve two purposes, why did he not choose those that were unsullied, in order to intrust them with that sacred mission, which is the noblest and the most exalted of all human functions? The mouth which nourishes the body by means of material food, also diffuses abroad speech and thought. Our flesh revives itself by means of itself, and at the same time, ideas are communicated by it. The sense of smell, which gives the vital air to the lungs, imparts all the perfumes of the world to the brain: the smell of flowers, of woods, of trees, of the sea. The ear,

which enables us to communicate with our fellow-men, has also allowed us to invent music, to create dreams, happiness, the infinite, and even physical pleasure, by means of sounds!

"But one might say that the Creator wished to prohibit man from ever ennobling and idealizing his commerce with women. Nevertheless, man has found love, which is not a bad reply to that sly Deity, and he has ornamented it so much with literary poetry, that woman often forgets the contact she is obliged to submit to. Those among us who are powerless to deceive themselves have invented vice and refined debauchery, which is another way of laughing at God, and of paying homage, immodest homage, to beauty.

"But the normal man makes children; just a beast that is coupled with another by law.

"Look at that woman! Is it not abominable to think that such a jewel, such a pearl, born to be beautiful, admired, fêted, and adored, has spent eleven years of her life in providing heirs for the Count de Mascaret?"

Bernard Grandin replied with a laugh: "There is a great deal of truth in all that, but very few people would understand you."

Salnis got more and more animated. "Do you know how I picture God myself?" he said. "As an enormous, creative organ unknown to us, who scatters millions of worlds into space, just as one single fish would deposit its spawn in the sea. He creates, because it is His function as God to do so, but He does not know what He is doing, and is stupidly prolific in His work, and is ignorant of the combi-

nations of all kinds which are produced by His scattered germs. Human thought is a lucky little local, passing accident, which was totally unforeseen, and is condemned to disappear with this earth, and to recommence perhaps here or elsewhere, the same or different, with fresh combinations of eternally new beginnings. We owe it to this slight accident which has happened to His intellect, that we are very uncomfortable in this world which was not made for us, which had not been prepared to receive us, to lodge and feed us, or to satisfy reflecting beings, and we owe it to Him also that we have to struggle without ceasing against what are still called the designs of Providence, when we are really refined and civilized beings."

Grandin, who was listening to him attentively, as he had long known the surprising outbursts of his fancy, asked him: "Then you believe that human thought is the spontaneous product of blind, divine parturition?"

"Naturally? A fortuitous function of the nerve-centers of our brain, like some unforeseen chemical action which is due to new mixtures, and which also resembles a product of electricity, caused by friction or the unexpected proximity of some substance, and which, lastly, resembles the phenomena caused by the infinite and fruitful fermentations of living matter.

"But, my dear fellow, the truth of this must be evident to anyone who looks about him. If human thought, ordained by an omniscient Creator, had been intended to be what it has become, altogether different from mechanical thoughts and resignation, so exacting, inquiring, agitated, tormented, would the

world which was created to receive the beings which we now are have been this unpleasant little dwelling place for poor fools, this salad plot, this rocky, wooded, and spherical kitchen garden where your improvident Providence has destined us to live naked, in caves or under trees, nourished on the flesh of slaughtered animals, our brethren, or on raw vegetables nourished by the sun and the rain.

"But it is sufficient to reflect for a moment, in order to understand that this world was not made for such creatures as we are. Thought, which is developed by a miracle in the nerves of the cells in our brain, powerless, ignorant, and confused as it is, and as it will always remain, makes all of us who are intellectual beings eternal and wretched exiles on earth.

"Look at this earth, as God has given it to those who inhabit it. Is it not visibly and solely made, planted and covered with forests, for the sake of animals? What is there for us? Nothing. And for them? Everything. They have nothing to do but to eat, or go hunting and eat each other, according to their instincts, for God never foresaw gentleness and peaceable manners; He only foresaw the death of creatures which were bent on destroying and devouring each other. Are not the quail, the pigeon, and the partridge the natural prey of the hawk? the sheep, the stag, and the ox that of the great flesh-eating animals, rather than meat that has been fattened to be served up to us with truffles, which have been unearthed by pigs, for our special benefit?

"As to ourselves, the more civilized, intellectual, and refined we are, the more we ought to conquer

and subdue that animal instinct, which represents the will of God in us. And so, in order to mitigate our lot as brutes, we have discovered and made everything, beginning with houses, then exquisite food, sauces, sweetmeats, pastry, drink, stuffs, clothes, ornaments, beds, mattresses, carriages, railways, and innumerable machines, besides arts and sciences, writing and poetry. Every ideal comes from us as well as the amenities of life, in order to make our existence as simple reproducers, for which divine Providence solely intended us, less monotonous and less hard.

"Look at this theater. Is there not here a human world created by us, unforeseen and unknown by Eternal destinies, comprehensible by our minds alone, a sensual and intellectual distraction, which has been invented solely by and for that discontented and restless little animal that we are.

"Look at that woman, Madame de Mascaret. God intended her to live in a cave naked, or wrapped up in the skins of wild animals, but is she not better as she is? But, speaking of her, does anyone know why and how her brute of a husband, having such a companion by his side, and especially after having been boorish enough to make her a mother seven times, has suddenly left her, to run after bad women?"

Grandin replied: "Oh! my dear fellow, this is probably the only reason. He found that always living with her was becoming too expensive in the end, and from reasons of domestic economy, he has arrived at the same principles which you lay down as a philosopher."

Just then the curtain rose for the third act, and they turned round, took off their hats, and sat down.

IV.

The Count and Countess Mascaret were sitting side by side in the carriage which was taking them home from the opera, without speaking. But suddenly the husband said to his wife: "Gabrielle!"

"What do you want?"

"Don't you think that this has lasted long enough?"

"What?"

"The horrible punishment to which you have condemned me for the last six years."

"What do you want? I cannot help it."

"Then tell me which of them it is?"

"Never."

"Think that I can no longer see my children or feel them round me, without having my heart burdened with this doubt. Tell me which of them it is, and I swear that I will forgive you, and treat it like the others."

"I have not the right to."

"You do not see that I can no longer endure this life, this thought which is wearing me out, or this question which I am constantly asking myself, this question which tortures me each time I look at them. It is driving me mad."

"Then you have suffered a great deal?" she said.

"Terribly. Should I, without that, have accepted the horror of living by your side, and the still greater horror of feeling and knowing that there is one among them whom I cannot recognize, and who prevents me from loving the others?"

She repeated: "Then you have really suffered very much?" And he replied in a constrained and sorrowful voice:

"Yes, for do I not tell you every day that it is intolerable torture to me? Should I have remained in that house, near you and them, if I did not love them? Oh! You have behaved abominably toward me. All the affection of my heart I have bestowed upon my children, and that you know. I am for them a father of the olden time, as I was for you a husband of one of the families of old, for by instinct I have remained a natural man, a man of former days. Yes, I will confess it, you have made me terribly jealous, because you are a woman of another race, of another soul, with other requirements. Oh! I shall never forget the things that you told me, but from that day, I troubled myself no more about you. I did not kill you, because then I should have had no means on earth of ever discovering which of our— of your children is not mine. I have waited, but I have suffered more than you would believe, for I can no longer venture to love them, except, perhaps, the two eldest; I no longer venture to look at them, to call them to me, to kiss them; I cannot take them on to my knee without asking myself: 'Can it be this one?' I have been correct in my behavior toward you for six years, and even kind and complaisant; tell me the truth, and I swear that I will do nothing unkind."

He thought, in spite of the darkness of the carriage, that he could perceive that she was moved, and feeling certain that she was going to speak at last, he said: "I beg you, I beseech you to tell me."

"I have been more guilty than you think perhaps," she replied; "but I could no longer endure that life of continual pregnancy, and I had only one means of driving you from my bed. I lied before God, and I lied, with my hand raised to my children's heads, for I have never wronged you."

He seized her arm in the darkness, and squeezing it as he had done on that terrible day of their drive in the Bois de Boulogne, he stammered: "Is that true?"

"It is true."

But he in terrible grief said with a groan: "I shall have fresh doubts that will never end! When did you lie, the last time or now? How am I to believe you at present? How can one believe a woman after that? I shall never again know what I am to think. I would rather you had said to me: 'It is Jacques, or, it is Jeanne.'"

The carriage drove them into the courtyard of their mansion, and when it had drawn up in front of the steps, the Count got down first as usual, and offered his wife his arm, to help her up. And then, as soon as they had reached the first floor he said: "May I speak to you for a few moments longer?"

And she replied: "I am quite willing."

They went into a small drawing-room, while a footman in some surprise, lit the wax candles. As soon as he had left the room and they were alone, he continued: "How am I to know the truth? I have begged you a thousand times to speak, but you have remained dumb, impenetrable, inflexible, inexorable, and now to-day, you tell me that you have been lying. For six years you have actually allowed

me to believe such a thing! No, you are lying now, I do not know why, but out of pity for me, perhaps?"

She replied in a sincere and convincing manner: "If I had not done so, I should have had four more children in the last six years!"

And he exclaimed: "Can a mother speak like that?"

"Oh!" she replied, "I do not at all feel that I am the mother of children who have never been born, it is enough for me to be the mother of those that I have, and to love them with all my heart. I am—we are—women who belong to the civilized world, Monsieur, and we are no longer, and we refuse to be, mere females who restock the earth."

She got up, but he seized her hands. "Only one word, Gabrielle. Tell me the truth!"

"I have just told you. I have never dishonored you."

He looked her full in the face, and how beautiful she was, with her gray eyes, like the cold sky. In her dark hair dress, on that opaque night of black hair, there shone the diamond coronet, like a cluster of stars. Then he suddenly felt, felt by a kind of intuition, that this grand creature was not merely a being destined to perpetuate his race, but the strange and mysterious product of all the complicated desires which have been accumulating in us for centuries but which have been turned aside from their primitive and divine object, and which have wandered after a mystic, imperfectly seen, and intangible beauty. There are some women like that, women who blossom only for our dreams, adorned with every poetical attribute of civilization, with that ideal

luxury, coquetry, and æsthetic charm which should surround the living statue who brightens our life.

Her husband remained standing before her, stupefied at the tardy and obscure discovery, confusedly hitting on the cause of his former jealousy, and understanding it all very imperfectly. At last he said: "I believe you, for I feel at this moment that you are not lying, and formerly, I really thought that you were."

She put out her hand to him: "We are friends then?"

He took her hand and kissed it, and replied: "We are friends. Thank you, Gabrielle."

Then he went out, still looking at her, and surprised that she was still so beautiful, and feeling a strange emotion arising in him, which was, perhaps, more formidable than antique and simple love.

AN AFFAIR OF STATE

PARIS had just heard of the disaster of Sedan. The Republic was proclaimed. All France was panting from a madness that lasted until the time of the Commonwealth. Everybody was playing at soldier from one end of the country to the other.

Capmakers became colonels, assuming the duties of generals; revolvers and daggers were displayed on large rotund bodies, enveloped in red sashes; common citizens turned warriors, commanding battalions of noisy volunteers, and swearing like troopers to emphasize their importance.

The very fact of bearing arms and handling guns with a system excited a people who hitherto had only handled scales and measures, and made them formidable to the first comer, without reason. They even executed a few innocent people to prove that they knew how to kill; and, in roaming through virgin fields still belonging to the Prussians, they shot stray dogs, cows chewing the cud in peace, or sick

horses put out to pasture. Each believed himself called upon to play a great rôle in military affairs. The *cafés* of the smallest villages, full of tradesmen in uniform, resembled barracks or field hospitals.

Now, the town of Canneville did not yet know the exciting news of the army and the Capital. It had, however, been greatly agitated for a month over an encounter between the rival political parties. The mayor, Viscount de Varnetot, a small, thin man, already old, remained true to the Empire, especially since he saw rising up against him a powerful adversary, in the great, sanguine form of Doctor Massarel, head of the Republican party in the district, venerable chief of the Masonic lodge, president of the Society of Agriculture and of the Fire Department, and organizer of the rural militia designed to save the country.

In two weeks he had induced sixty-three men to volunteer in defense of their country—married men, fathers of families, prudent farmers and merchants of the town. These he drilled every morning in front of the mayor's window.

Whenever the mayor happened to appear, Commander Massarel, covered with pistols, passing proudly up and down in front of his troops, would make them shout, "Long live our country!" And this, they noticed, disturbed the little viscount, who no doubt heard in it menace and defiance, and perhaps some odious recollection of the great Revolution.

On the morning of the fifth of September, in uniform, his revolver on the table, the doctor gave consultation to an old peasant couple. The husband had suffered with a varicose vein for seven years, but had

waited until his wife had one too, so that they might go and hunt up a physician together, guided by the postman when he should come with the newspaper.

Dr. Massarel opened the door, grew pale, straightened himself abruptly and, raising his arms to heaven in a gesture of exaltation, cried out with all his might, in the face of the amazed rustics:

"Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic!"

Then he dropped into his armchair weak with emotion.

When the peasant explained that this sickness commenced with a feeling as if ants were running up and down in his legs, the doctor exclaimed: "Hold your peace. I have spent too much time with you stupid people. The Republic is proclaimed! The Emperor is a prisoner! France is saved! Long live the Republic!" And, running to the door, he bellowed: "Celeste! Quick! Celeste!"

The frightened maid hastened in. He stuttered, so rapidly did he try to speak: "My boots, my saber —my cartridge box—and—the Spanish dagger, which is on my night table. Hurry now!"

The obstinate peasant, taking advantage of the moment's silence, began again: "This seemed like some cysts that hurt me when I walked."

The exasperated physician shouted: "Hold your peace! For Heaven's sake! If you had washed your feet oftener, it would not have happened." Then, seizing him by the neck, he hissed in his face: "Can you not comprehend that we are living in a Republic, stupid?"

But professional sentiment calmed him suddenly,

and he let the astonished old couple out of the house, repeating all the time:

"Return to-morrow, return to-morrow, my friends; I have no more time to-day."

While equipping himself from head to foot, he gave another series of urgent orders to the maid:

"Run to Lieutenant Picard's and to Sub-lieutenant Pommel's and say to them that I want them here immediately. Send Torcheboeuf to me, too, with his drum. Quick, now! Quick!" And when Celeste was gone, he collected his thoughts and prepared to surmount the difficulties of the situation.

The three men arrived together. They were in their working clothes. The Commander, who had expected to see them in uniform, had a fit of surprise.

"You know nothing, then? The Emperor has been taken prisoner. A Republic is proclaimed. My position is delicate, not to say perilous."

He reflected for some minutes before the astonished faces of his subordinates and then continued:

"It is necessary to act, not to hesitate. Minutes now are worth hours at other times. Everything depends upon promptness of decision. You, Picard, go and find the curate and get him to ring the bell to bring the people together, while I get ahead of them. You, Torcheboeuf, beat the call to assemble the militia in arms, in the square, from even as far as the hamlets of Gerisaie and Salmare. You, Pommel, put on your uniform at once, that is, the jacket and cap. We, together, are going to take possession of the mairie and summon M. de Varnetot to transfer his authority to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Act, then, and promptly. I will accompany you to your house, Pommel, since we are to work together."

Five minutes later, the Commander and his subaltern, armed to the teeth, appeared in the square, just at the moment when the little Viscount de Varnetot, with hunting gaiters on and his rifle on his shoulder, appeared by another street, walking rapidly and followed by three guards in green jackets, each carrying a knife at his side and a gun over his shoulder.

While the doctor stopped, half stupefied, the four men entered the mayor's house and the door closed behind them.

"We are forestalled," murmured the doctor; "it will be necessary now to wait for re-enforcements; nothing can be done for a quarter of an hour."

Here Lieutenant Picard appeared: "The curate refuses to obey," said he; "he has even shut himself up in the church with the beadle and the porter."

On the other side of the square, opposite the white, closed front of the mairie, the church, mute and black, showed its great oak door with the wrought-iron trimmings.

Then, as the puzzled inhabitants put their noses out of the windows, or came out upon the steps of their houses, the rolling of a drum was heard, and Torcheboeuf suddenly appeared, beating with fury the three quick strokes of the call to arms. He crossed the square with disciplined step, and then disappeared on a road leading to the country.

The Commander drew his sword, advanced alone to the middle distance between the two buildings

where the enemy was barricaded and, waving his weapon above his head, roared at the top of his lungs: "Long live the Republic! Death to traitors!" Then he fell back where his officers were. The butcher, the baker, and the apothecary, feeling a little uncertain, put up their shutters and closed their shops. The grocery alone remained open.

Meanwhile the men of the militia were arriving, little by little, variously clothed, but all wearing caps, the cap constituting the whole uniform of the corps. They were armed with their old, rusty guns, guns that had hung on chimney-pieces in kitchens for thirty years, and looked quite like a detachment of country soldiers.

When there were about thirty around him, the Commander explained in a few words, the state of affairs. Then, turning toward his major, he said: "Now, we must act."

While the inhabitants collected, talked over and discussed the matter, the doctor quickly formed his plan of campaign:

"Lieutenant Picard, you advance to the windows of the mayor's house and order M. de Varnetot to turn over the townhall to me, in the name of the Republic."

But the lieutenant was a master-mason and refused.

"You are a scamp, you are. Trying to make a target of me! Those fellows in there are good shots, you know that. No, thanks! Execute your commissions yourself!"

The Commander turned red: "I order you to go in the name of discipline," said he.

"I am not spoiling my features without knowing why," the lieutenant returned.

Men of influence, in a group near by, were heard laughing. One of them called out: "You are right, Picard, it is not the proper time." The doctor, under his breath, muttered: "Cowards!" And, placing his sword and his revolver in the hands of a soldier, he advanced with measured step, his eye fixed on the windows, as if he expected to see a gun or a cannon pointed at him.

When he was within a few steps of the building the doors at the two extremities, affording an entrance to two schools, opened, and a flood of little creatures, boys on one side, girls on the other, poured out and began playing in the open space, chattering around the doctor like a flock of birds. He scarcely knew what to make of it.

As soon as the last were out, the doors closed. The greater part of the little monkeys finally scattered, and then the Commander called out in a loud voice: "Monsieur de Varnetot?" A window in the first story opened and M. de Varnetot appeared.

The Commander began: "Monsieur, you are aware of the great events which have changed the system of Government. The party you represent no longer exists. The side I represent now comes into power. Under these sad, but decisive circumstances, I come to demand you, in the name of the Republic, to put in my hand the authority vested in you by the outgoing power."

M. de Varnetot replied: "Doctor Massarel, I am mayor of Canneville, so placed by the proper authorities, and mayor of Canneville I shall remain until the

title is revoked and replaced by an order from my superiors. As mayor, I am at home in the mairie, and there I shall stay. Furthermore, just try to put me out." And he closed the window.

The Commander returned to his troops. But, before explaining anything, measuring Lieutenant Picard from head to foot, he said:

"You are a numskull, you are,—a goose, the disgrace of the army. I shall degrade you."

The Lieutenant replied: "I'll attend to that myself." And he went over to a group of muttering civilians.

Then the doctor hesitated. What should he do? Make an assault? Would his men obey him? And then, was he surely in the right? An idea burst upon him. He ran to the telegraph office, on the other side of the square, and hurriedly sent three dispatches: "To the Members of the Republican Government, at Paris"; "To the New Republican Prefect of the Lower Seine, at Rouen"; "To the New Republican Sub-Prefect of Dieppe."

He exposed the situation fully; told of the danger run by the commonwealth from remaining in the hands of the monarchistic mayor, offered his devout services, asked for orders and signed his name, following it up with all his titles. Then he returned to his army corps and, drawing ten francs out of his pocket, said:

"Now, my friends, go and eat and drink a little something. Only leave here a detachment of ten men, so that no one leaves the mayor's house."

Ex-Lieutenant Picard chatting with the watchmaker, overheard this. With a sneer he remarked:

"Pardon me, but if they go out, there will be an opportunity for you to go in. Otherwise, I can't see how you are to get in there!"

The doctor made no reply, but went away to luncheon. In the afternoon, he disposed of offices all about town, having the air of knowing of an impending surprise. Many times he passed before the doors of the mairie and of the church, without noticing anything suspicious; one could have believed the two buildings empty.

The butcher, the baker, and the apothecary reopened their shops, and stood gossiping on the steps. If the Emperor had been taken prisoner, there must be a traitor somewhere. They did not feel sure of the revenue of a new Republic.

Night came on. Toward nine o'clock, the doctor returned quietly and alone to the mayor's residence, persuaded that his adversary had retired. And, as he was trying to force an entrance with a few blows of a pickaxe, the loud voice of a guard demanded suddenly: "Who goes there?" Monsieur Massarel beat a retreat at the top of his speed.

Another day dawned without any change in the situation. The militia in arms occupied the square. The inhabitants stood around awaiting the solution. People from neighboring villages came to look on. Finally, the doctor, realizing that his reputation was at stake, resolved to settle the thing in one way or another. He had just decided that it must be something energetic, when the door of the telegraph office opened and the little servant of the directress appeared, holding in her hand two papers.

She went directly to the Commander and gave

him one of the dispatches; then, crossing the square, intimidated by so many eyes fixed upon her, with lowered head and mincing steps, she rapped gently at the door of the barricaded house, as if ignorant that a part of the army was concealed there.

The door opened slightly; the hand of a man received the message, and the girl returned, blushing and ready to weep, from being stared at.

The doctor demanded, with stirring voice: "A little silence, if you please." And, after the populace became quiet, he continued proudly:

"Here is a communication which I have received from the Government." And raising the dispatch, he read:

"Old mayor deposed. Advise us of what is most necessary. Instructions later.

"For the Sub-Prefect,

"SAPIN, *Counselor.*"

He had triumphed. His heart was beating with joy. His hand trembled, when Picard, his old subaltern, cried out to him from a neighboring group: "That's all right; but if the others in there won't go out, your paper hasn't a leg to stand on." The doctor grew a little pale. If they would not go out —in fact, he must go ahead now. It was not only his right, but his duty. And he looked anxiously at the house of the mayoralty, hoping that he might see the door open and his adversary show himself. But the door remained closed. What was to be done? The crowd was increasing, surrounding the militia. Some laughed.

One thought, especially, tortured the doctor. If he should make an assault, he must march at the head

of his men; and as, with him dead, all contest would cease, it would be at him, and at him alone that M. de Varnetot and the three guards would aim. And their aim was good, very good! Picard had reminded him of that.

But an idea shone in upon him, and turning to Pommel, he said: "Go, quickly, and ask the apothecary to send me a napkin and a pole."

The Lieutenant hurried off. The doctor was going to make a political banner, a white one. that would perhaps, rejoice the heart of that old legitimist, the mayor.

Pommel returned with the required linen and a broom handle. With some pieces of string, they improvised a standard, which Massarel seized in both hands. Again, he advanced toward the house of mayoralty, bearing the standard before him. When in front of the door, he called out: "Monsieur de Varnetot!"

The door opened suddenly, and M. de Varnetot and the three guards appeared on the threshold. The doctor recoiled, instinctively. Then, he saluted his enemy courteously, and announced, almost strangled by emotion: "I have come, sir, to communicate to you the instructions I have just received."

That gentleman, without any salutation whatever, replied: "I am going to withdraw, sir, but you must understand that it is not because of fear, or in obedience to an odious government that has usurped the power." And, biting off each word, he declared: "I do not wish to have the appearance of serving the Republic for a single day. That is all."

Massarel, amazed, made no reply; and M. de

Varnetot, walking off at a rapid pace, disappeared around the corner, followed closely by his escort. Then the doctor, slightly dismayed, returned to the crowd. When he was near enough to be heard, he cried: "Hurrah! Hurrah! The Republic triumphs all along the line!"

But no emotion was manifested. The doctor tried again: "The people are free! You are free and independent! Do you understand? Be proud of it!"

The listless villagers looked at him with eyes unlit by glory. In his turn, he looked at them, indignant at their indifference, seeking for some word that could make a grand impression, electrify this placid country and make good his mission. The inspiration came, and turning to Pommel, he said: "Lieutenant, go and get the bust of the ex-Emperor, which is in the Council Hall, and bring it to me with a chair."

And soon the man reappears, carrying on his right shoulder, Napoleon III. in plaster, and holding in his left hand a straw-bottomed chair.

Massarel met him, took the chair, placed it on the ground, put the white image upon it, fell back a few steps and called out, in sonorous voice:

"Tyrant! Tyrant! Here do you fall! Fall in the dust and in the mire. An expiring country groans under your feet. Destiny has called you the Avenger. Defeat and shame cling to you. You fall conquered, a prisoner to the Prussians, and upon the ruins of the crumbling Empire the young and radiant Republic arises, picking up your broken sword."

He awaited applause. But there was no voice, no sound. The bewildered peasants remained silent. And

the bust, with its pointed mustaches extending beyond the cheeks on each side, the bust, so motionless and well groomed as to be fit for a hairdresser's sign, seemed to be looking at M. Massarel with a plaster smile, a smile ineffaceable and mocking.

They remained thus face to face, Napoleon on the chair, the doctor in front of him about three steps away. Suddenly the Commander grew angry. What was to be done? What was there that would move this people, and bring about a definite victory in opinion? His hand happened to rest on his hip and to come in contact there with the butt end of his revolver, under his red sash. No inspiration, no further word would come. But he drew his pistol, advanced two steps, and, taking aim, fired at the late monarch. The ball entered the forehead, leaving a little, black hole, like a spot, nothing more. There was no effect. Then he fired a second shot, which made a second hole, then, a third; and then, without stopping, he emptied his revolver. The brow of Napoleon disappeared in white powder, but the eyes, the nose, and the fine points of the mustaches remained intact. Then, exasperated, the doctor overturned the chair with a blow of his fist and, resting a foot on the remainder of the bust in a position of triumph, he shouted: "So let all tyrants perish!"

Still no enthusiasm was manifest, and as the spectators seemed to be in a kind of stupor from astonishment, the Commander called to the militiamen: "You may now go to your homes." And he went toward his own house with great strides, as if he were pursued.

His maid, when he appeared, told him that some

patients had been waiting in his office for three hours. He hastened in. There were the two varicose-vein patients, who had returned at daybreak, obstinate but patient.

The old man immediately began his explanation: "This began by a feeling like ants running up and down the legs."

THE WOODEN SHOES

THE old priest was sputtering out the last words of his sermon over the white caps of the peasant women, and the rough or greasy heads of the men. The large baskets of the farmers' wives who had come from a distance to attend mass were on the ground beside them, and the heavy heat of a July day caused them all to exhale a smell like that of cattle, or of a flock of sheep, and the cocks could be heard crowing through the large west door, which was wide open, as well as the lowing of the cows in a neighboring field.

"As God wishes. Amen!" the priest said. Then he ceased, opened a book, and, as he did every week, began to give notice of all the small parish events for the following week. He was an old man with white hair who had been in the parish for over forty years, and from the pulpit was in the habit of discoursing familiarly to them all; so he went on: "I recommend Désiré Vallin, who is very ill, to your

prayers, and also La Paumelle, who is not recovering from her confinement satisfactorily."

He had forgotten the rest, and so he looked for the slips of paper which were put away in a breviary. At last he found two and continued: "I will not have the lads and the girls come into the churchyard in the evening, as they do; otherwise I shall inform the rural policeman. Monsieur Césaire Omont would like to find a respectable girl as servant." He reflected for a few moments, and then added: "That is all, my brethren, and I wish that all of you may find the Divine mercy." And he came down from the pulpit, to finish mass.

When the Malandains had returned to their cottage, which was the last in the village of La Sablière, on the road to Fourville, the father, a thin, wrinkled old peasant, sat down at the table, while his wife took the saucepan off the fire, and Adelaide, the daughter, took the glasses and plates out of the sideboard. Then the father said: "I think that place at Maître Omont's ought to be a good one, as he is a widower and his daughter-in-law does not like him. He is all alone and has money. I think it would be a good thing to send Adelaide there."

His wife put the black saucepan on to the table, took the lid off, and while the steam, which smelled strongly of cabbage, rose into the air she pondered on the suggestion. Presently the old man continued: "He has got some money, that is certain, but any one going there ought to be very sharp, and Adelaide is not that at all."

His wife replied: "I might go and see, all the same," and turning to her daughter, a strapping, silly

looking girl with yellow hair and fat, red cheeks like apples, she said: "Do you hear, you great silly? You are to go to Maître Omont's and offer yourself as his servant, and you will do whatever he tells you."

The girl began to laugh in a foolish manner, without replying, and then the three began their dinner. In a few minutes, the father continued: "Listen to me, girl, and try not to make a mistake about what I am going to say to you." And slowly and minutely he laid down for her her line of conduct, anticipating the minutest details, and preparing her for the conquest of an old widower who was on unfriendly terms with his family. The mother ceased eating to listen to him, and she sat there, with her fork in her hand, looking at her husband and her daughter by turns, and following every word with concentrated and silent attention, while Adelaide remained listless, docile, and stupid, with vague and wandering eyes.

As soon as their meal was over, her mother made her put her cap on, and they both started off to see Monsieur Césaire Omont. He lived in a small, brick house adjoining his tenants' cottages, for he had retired, and was living by subdividing and letting his land.

He was about fifty-five years old, and was stout, jovial, and rough-mannered, as rich men often are. He laughed and shouted loud enough to make the walls fall down, drank brandy and cider by the glassful, and was said to be still of an amorous disposition, in spite of his age. He liked to walk about his fields with his hands behind his back, digging his wooden shoes into the fat soil, looking at the

sprouting corn or the flowering colza with the eye of a retired farmer, at his ease, who likes to see the crops but does not trouble himself about them any longer. People used to say of him: "There is a Mr. Merry-man, who does not get up in a good temper every day."

He received the two women, as he was finishing his coffee, with his fat stomach against the table, and turning round said: "What do you want?"

The mother was spokeswoman. "This is our girl Adelaide, and I have come to ask you to take her as servant, as Monsieur le Curé told us you wanted one."

Maître Omont looked at the girl, and then he said roughly: "How old is the great she-goat?"

"Twenty last Michaelmas-Day, Monsieur Omont."

"That is settled, she will have fifteen francs a month and her food. I shall expect her to-morrow, to make my soup in the morning." And he dismissed the two women.

The next day Adelaide entered upon her duties, and began to work hard, without saying a word, as she was in the habit of doing at home. About nine o'clock, as she was scrubbing the kitchen floor, Monsieur Omont called her: "Adelaide!"

She came immediately saying: "Here I am, master." As soon as she was opposite him, with her red and neglected hands, and her troubled looks, he said. "Now just listen to me, so that there may be no mistake between us. You are my servant, but nothing else; you understand what I mean. We shall keep our shoes apart."

"Yes, master."

"Each in our own place, my girl, you in your kitchen; I in my dining-room, and with that exception, everything will be for you just as it is for me. Is that settled?"

"Yes, master."

"Very well; that is all right, and now go to your work."

And she went out, to attend to her duties, and at midday she served up her master's dinner in the little drawing-room with the flowered paper on the walls, and then, when the soup was on the table, she went to tell him. "Dinner is ready, master."

He went in and sat down, looked round, unfolded his table napkin, hesitated for a moment and then in a voice of thunder he shouted: "Adelaide!"

She rushed in, terribly frightened, for he had shouted as if he meant to murder her.

"Well, in heaven's name, where is your place?"

"But, master!"

"I do not like to eat alone," he roared; "you will sit there, or go to the devil, if you don't choose to do so. Go and get your plate and glass."

She brought them in, feeling very frightened, and stammered: "Here I am, master," and then sat down opposite to him. He grew jovial; clinked glasses with her, rapped the table, and told her stories to which she listened with downcast eyes, without daring to say a word, and from time to time she got up to fetch some bread, cider, or plates. When she brought in the coffee she only put one cup before him, and then he grew angry again, and growled: "Well, what about yourself?"

"I never take any, master."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not like it."

Then he burst out afresh: "I am not fond of having my coffee by myself, confound it! If you will not take it here, you can go to the devil. Go and get a cup, and make haste about it."

So she went and fetched a cup, sat down again, tasted the black liquor and made faces over it, but swallowed it to the last drop, under her master's furious looks. Then he made her also drink her first glass of brandy as an extra drop, the second as a livener, and the third as a kick behind, and then he told her to go and wash up her plates and dishes, adding, that she was "a good sort of girl."

It was the same at supper, after which she had to play dominoes with him. Then he sent her to bed, saying that he should come upstairs soon. So she went to her room, a garret under the roof, and after saying her prayers, undressed and got into bed. But very soon she sprang up in a fright, for a furious shout had shaken the house. "Adelaide!" She opened her door, and replied from her attic: "Here I am, master."

"Where are you?"

"In bed, of course, master."

Then he roared out: "Will you come downstairs, in heaven's name? I do not like to sleep alone, and, by Jove, if you object, you can just go at once."

Then in her terror she replied from upstairs: "I will come, master." She looked for her candle, and he soon heard her small clogs pattering down the stairs. When she had got to the bottom steps, he

seized her by the arm, and as soon as she had left her light wooden shoes by the side of her master's heavy boots, he pushed her into his room, growling out: "Quicker than that, confound it!"

And without knowing what she was saying she answered: "Here I am, here I am, master."

Six months later, when she went to see her parents one Sunday, her father looked at her curiously, and then said: "Are you not *enceinte?*"

She remained thunderstruck, and looked at her waist, and then said: "No, I do not think so."

Then he asked her, for he wanted to know everything: "Just tell me, didn't you mix your clogs together, one night?"

"Yes, I mixed them the first night, and then every other night."

"Well, then you are *enceinte,* you great fool!"

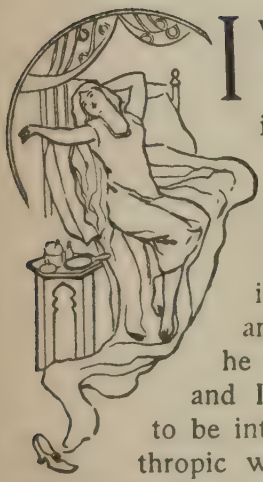
On hearing that, she began to sob, and stammered: "How could I know? How was I to know?" Old Malandain looked at her knowingly, and appeared very pleased, and then he asked: "What did you not know?" And amid tears she replied: "How was I to know how children were made?" And when her mother came back, the man said, without any anger: "There, she is *enceinte,* now."

But the woman was furious, her finer instinct revolted, and she called her daughter, who was in tears, every name she could think of—a "trollop" and a "strumpet." Then, however, the old man made her hold her tongue, and as he took up his cap to go and talk the matter over with Master Césaire Omont, he remarked: "She is actually more stupid

than I thought she was; she did not even know what he was doing, the fool!"

On the next Sunday, after the sermon, the old Curé published the banns between Monsieur Onufre-Césaire Omont and Céleste-Adelaide Malandain.

BABETTE



I was not very fond of inspecting that asylum for old, infirm people officially, as I was obliged to go over it in company of the superintendent, who was talkative and a statistician. But then the grandson of the foundress accompanied us, and was evidently pleased at that minute inspection. He was a charming man, and the owner of a large forest, where he had given me permission to shoot, and I was of course obliged to pretend to be interested in his grandmother's philanthropic work. So with a smile on my lips, I endured the superintendent's interminable discourse, punctuating it here and there, as best as I could by:

"Ah! really! Very strange indeed! I should never have believed it!"

I was absolutely ignorant of the remark to which I replied thus, for my thoughts were lulled to repose by the constant humming of our loquacious guide. I was vaguely conscious that the persons and things

might have appeared worthy of attention to me, if I had been there alone as an idler, for in that case, I should certainly have asked the superintendent: "Who is this Babette, whose name appears so constantly in the complaints of so many of the inmates."

Quite a dozen men and women had spoken to us about her, now to complain of her, now to praise her; and especially the women, as soon as they saw the superintendent, cried out:

"M'sieur, Babette has again been—"

"There! that will do, that will do!" he interrupted them, his gentle voice suddenly becoming harsh.

At other times he would amicably question some old man with a happy countenance, and say:

"Well, my friend! I suppose you are very happy here?"

Many replied with fervent expressions of gratitude, with which Babette's name was frequently mingled. When he heard them speak so, the superintendent put on an ecstatic air, looked up to heaven with clasped hands, and said, slowly shaking his head: "Ah! Babette is a very precious woman, very precious!"

Yes, it would certainly interest one to know who that creature was, but not under present circumstances, and so, rather than to undergo any more of this, I made up my mind to remain in ignorance of who Babette was, for I could pretty well guess what she would be like. I pictured her to myself as a flower that had sprung up in a corner of these dull courtyards, like a ray of sun shining through the sepulchral gloom of these dismal passages.

I pictured her so clearly to myself, that I did not even feel any wish to know her. Yet she was dear

to me, because of the happy expression which they all put on when they spoke of her, and I was angry with the old women who spoke against her. One thing, certainly, puzzled me, and that was, that the superintendent was among those who went into ecstasies over her, and this made me strongly disinclined to question him about her, though I had no other reason for the feeling.

But all this passed through my mind in rather a confused manner, without my taking the trouble to fix or to formulate any ideas or explanations. I continued to dream rather than to think effectively, and it is very probable that, when my visit was over, I should not have remembered much about it, not even with regard to Babette, if I had not been suddenly awakened by the sight of her in the flesh, and been quite upset by the difference that there was between my fancy and the reality.

We had just crossed a small back yard, and had gone into a very dark passage, when a door suddenly opened at the other end of it, and an unexpected apparition appeared. We could indistinctly see that it was the figure of a woman. At the same moment, the superintendent called out in a furious voice:

"Babette! Babette!"

He had mechanically quickened his pace, and almost ran. We followed him, and he quickly opened the door through which the apparition had vanished. It led on to a staircase, and he again called out, but a burst of stifled laughter was the only reply. I looked over the balustrade, and saw a woman down below, who was looking at us fixedly.

She was an old woman — there could be no doubt

of that, from her wrinkled face, and the few straggling gray locks which appeared under her cap. But one did not think of that when one saw her eyes, which were wonderfully youthful, in fact, one saw nothing but them. They were profound eyes, of a deep, almost violet blue; the eyes of a child.

Suddenly the superintendent called out to her: "You have been with *La Frieze* again!"

The old woman did not reply, but shook with laughter, as she had done just before; and then she ran off, giving the superintendent a look, which said as plainly as words could have done: "Do you think I care a fig for you?"

Those insulting words were clearly written in her face, and at the same time I noticed that the old woman's eyes had utterly changed, for during that short moment of bravado, the childish eyes had become the eyes of a monkey, of some ferocious, obstinate baboon.

This time, in spite of my dislike to question him further, I could not help saying to him: "That is Babette, I suppose?"

"Yes," he replied, growing rather red, as if he guessed that I understood the old woman's insulting looks.

"Is she the woman who is so precious?" I added, with a touch of irony, which made him grow altogether crimson.

"That is she," he said, walking on quickly, so as to escape my further questions.

But I was egged on by curiosity, and I made a direct appeal to our host's complaisance: "I should like to see this *Frieze*," I said. "Who is *Frieze*?"

He turned round, and said: "Oh! nothing, nothing, he is not at all interesting. What is the good of seeing him? It is not worth while."

And he ran downstairs, two steps at a time. He who was usually so minute, and so very careful to explain everything, was now in a hurry to get finished, and our visit was cut short.

The next day I had to leave that part of the country, without hearing anything more about Babette, but I came back about four months later, when the shooting season began. I had not forgotten her during that time, for nobody could ever forget her eyes, and so I was very glad to have as my traveling companion, on my three hours' diligence journey from the station to my friend's house, a man who talked to me about her all the time.

He was a young magistrate whom I had already met, and who had much interested me by his wit, by his close manner of observing things, by his singularly refined casuistry, and, above all, by the contrast between his professional severity and his tolerant philosophy.

But he never appeared so attractive to me as he did on that day, when he told me the history of the mysterious Babette.

He had inquired into it, and had applied all his facilities as an examining magistrate to it, for, like me, his visit to the asylum had roused his curiosity. This is what he had learned and what he told me.

When she was ten years old, Babette had been violated by her own father, and at thirteen had been sent to the house of correction for vagabondage and debauchery. From the time she was twenty

until she was forty, she had been a servant in the neighborhood, frequently changing her situations, and being nearly everywhere her employer's mistress. She had ruined several families without getting any money herself, and without gaining any definite position. A shopkeeper had committed suicide on her account, and a respectable young fellow had turned thief and incendiary, and had finished at the hulks.

She had been married twice, and had twice been left a widow, and for ten years, until she was fifty, she had been the only courtesan in the district.

"She was very pretty, I suppose?"

"No, she never was that. It seems she was short, thin, with no bust or hips, at her best, I am told, and nobody can remember that she was pretty, even when she was young."

"Then how can you explain?"

"How?" the magistrate exclaimed. "Well! what about the eyes? You could not have looked at them?"

"Yes, yes, you are right," I replied. "Those eyes explain many things, certainly. They are the eyes of an innocent child."

"Ah!" he exclaimed again, enthusiastically, "Cleopatra, Diana of Poitiers, Ninon de L'Enclos, all the queens of love who were adored when they were growing old, must have had eyes like hers. A woman who has such eyes can never grow old. But if Babette lives to be a hundred, she will always be loved as she has been, and as she is."

"As she is! Bah! By whom, pray?"

"By all the old men in the asylum, by Jove; by all those who have preserved a fiber that can be

touched, a corner of their heart that can be inflamed, or the least spark of desire left."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. And the superintendent loves her more than any of them."

"Impossible!"

"I would stake my head on it."

"Well, after all it is possible, and even probable; it is even certain. I now remember."

And I again saw the insulting, ferocious, familiar look which she had given the superintendent.

"And who is *La Frieze?*" I asked the magistrate suddenly. "I suppose you know that also?"

"He is a retired butcher, who had both his legs frozen in the war of 1870, and of whom she is very fond. No doubt he is a cripple, with two wooden legs, but still a vigorous man enough, in spite of his fifty-three years. The loins of a Hercules, and the face of a satyr. The superintendent is quite jealous of him!"

I thought the matter over again, and it seemed very probable to me. "Does she love *La Frieze?*"

"Yes, he is the chosen lover."

When we arrived at the host's house a short time afterward, we were surprised to find everybody in a terrible state of excitement. A crime had been committed in the asylum; the gendarmes were there and our host was with them, so we instantly joined them. *La Frieze* had murdered the superintendent, and they gave us the details, which were horrible. The former butcher had hidden behind a door, and catching hold of the other, had rolled on to the ground with him and bitten him in the throat, tear-

ing out his carotid artery, from which the blood spurted into the murderer's face.

I saw him, *La Frieze.* His fat face, which had been badly washed, was still blood stained; he had a low forehead, square jaws, pointed ears, sticking out from his head, and flat nostrils, like the muzzle of some wild animal; but above all, I saw Babette.

She was smiling, and at that moment, her eyes had not their monkey-like and ferocious expression; they were pleading and tender, full of the sweetest child-like candor.

"You know," my host said to me in a low voice, "that the poor woman has fallen into senile imbecility, and that is the cause of her looks, which are strange, considering the terrible sight she has seen."

"Do you think so?" the magistrate said. "You must remember that she is not yet sixty, and I do not think that it is a case of senile imbecility, but that she is quite conscious of the crime that has been committed."

"Then why should she smile?"

"Because she is pleased at what she has done."

"Oh! no, you are really too subtle!"

The magistrate suddenly turned to Babette, and, looking at her steadily, he said:

"I suppose you know what has happened, and why this crime was committed?"

She left off smiling, and her pretty, childlike eyes became abominable monkey's eyes again, and then the answer was, suddenly to pull up her petticoats and to show us the lower part of her limbs. Yes, the magistrate had been quite right. That old woman had been a Cleopatra, a Diana, a Ninon de l'Enclos,

and the rest of her body had remained like a child's, even more than her eyes. We were thunderstruck at the sight.

"Pigs! pigs!" *La Frieze* shouted to us, "you also want to have something to do with her!"

And I saw that actually the magistrate's face was pale and contracted, and that his hands and lips trembled like those of a man caught in the act of doing wrong.

MAMMA STIRLING

TALL, slim, looking almost naked under her transparent dress of gauze, which fell in straight folds as far as the gold bracelets on her slender wrists, with languor in her rich voice, and something undulating and feline in the rhythmical swing of her wrist and hips, Tatia Caroly was singing one of those sweet Creole songs which call up some far distant fairy-like country, and those unknown caresses for which the lips are always thirsting.

Footit, the clown, was leaning against the piano with a blackened face, and with a mouth that looked like the red gash from a saber cut, and his wide-open eyes expressed feelings of the most extravagant emotion, while some niggers squatted on the ground, and accompanied the orchestra by strumming on some yellow, empty gourds.

But what made the women and the children in the pontomime of the "New Circus" laugh most was the incessant quarrel between an enormous Danish

hound and a poor old supernumerary, who was blackened like a negro minstrel, and dressed like a mulatto woman. The dog was always annoying him, followed him, snapped at his legs and at his old wig with his sharp teeth, and tore his coat and his silk pocket-handkerchief, whenever he could get hold of it, to pieces. And the man used positively to allow himself to be molested and bitten and played his part with dull resignation — with the mechanical unconsciousness of a man who has come down in the world, who gains his livelihood as best he can, and who has already endured worse things.

When Tatia, half turning round to the two clubmen, with whom she had just been dining at the *Café Anglais*, used her large fan of black feathers, in a pretty, supple pose, with the light falling on to the nape of her fair neck, Noèle de Fréjus exclaimed: "Wherever did they unearth that horrible, grotesque figure?"

Lord Shelley, who was a pillar of the circuses, and who knew the performances, the length of time the acrobats had been performing, and the private history of all of them, whether clowns or circus riders, replied: "Don't you recognize him, my friend?"

"That lump of soot? Are you jesting with me?"

"He certainly has very much changed, poor fellow, and not to his advantage. Nevertheless, James Stirling was a model of manly beauty and elegance, and led such an extravagant life that all sorts of stories were rife about him. Many people declared that he was some high-class adventurer. At any rate he thought no more of danger than he did of smoking a good cigar.

"Don't you remember him at the Hippodrome, when he stood on the bare back of a horse, and drove five others tandem fashion at full gallop and without making a mistake, curbing them, or urging them on with his thin, muscular hands, just as he pleased? He seemed to be riveted on to the back of the horse, and kept on it as if he had been held on by invisible hands."

"Yes, I remember him — James Stirling," said Tatia. "The circus rider, James Stirling, on whose account that tall girl Caro, who was also a circus rider, gave that old stager Blanche Taupin a cut right and left across the face with her riding-whip, because she had tried to get him from her. But what can have happened to him, to have brought him down to such a position?"

Horrible, hairy monkeys, grimacing under their red and blue masks, had invaded the arena, and with their hair hanging down on to their bare shoulders looked very funny, with their long tails, their gray skin tights, and their velvet breeches. These female dancers twisted, jumped, hopped, and drew their lascivious and voluptuous circle more closely round *Chocolat*, who shook the red skirts of his coat, rolled his eyes, and showed his large, white teeth in a foolish smile, as if he were the prey to irresistible desire, and yet terribly afraid of what might happen. Lord Shelley taking some grapes out of a basket that Noèle de Fréjus offered him, said: "It is not a very cheerful story, but then true stories rarely are. At the time when he was still unknown, and when he used to have to tighten his belt more frequently than he got enough to eat and drink, James Stirling followed the destinies of a circus which traveled with its vans

from fair to fair and from place to place, and fell in love with a gypsy columbine, who also formed part of this wandering, half-starved company.

"She was not twenty, and astonished the others by her rash boldness, her absolute contempt for danger and obstacles, and her strange and adroit strength. She charmed them also by the magic aura which came from her hair, which was darker than a starless night, from her large, black, coaxing, velvety eyes—concealed by the fringe of long lashes that curled upwards, from her scented skin, as soft as rice paper, every touch of which was a suggestive and tempting caress, and from her firm, full, smiling, childlike mouth, which uttered nothing but laughter, jokes, and love songs, and gave promise of kisses.

"She rode bare-backed horses, without bit or bridle, stretched herself out on their backs, as if on a bed, mingling her disheveled hair with their manes, swaying her supple body to their most impetuous movements, and at other times standing almost on their withers or on the cruppers, while she juggled with looking-glasses, brass balls, and knives that flashed as they twirled rapidly round in the smoky light of the paraffin lamps that were fastened to the tent poles.

"Her name was *Sacha*, a pretty Slavonic name which has a sweet and strange sound, and she gave herself to Stirling entirely, because he was handsome, strong, and spoke to women very gently, like one talks to little children, who are easily frightened and made to cry. It was on her account that in a quarrel in Holland he knocked down an Italian wild-beast tamer, by a blow between the eyes.

"They adored each other so that they never thought of their poverty, but redoubled their caresses when they had nothing to eat, not even an unripe apple stolen from an orchard, nor a lump of bread which they might have begged on the road, of some charitable soul. They embraced each other more ardently still, when they were obliged to stop for the night in the open country, shivering in the old, badly-closed vans, stinting the scanty supply of wood, and unable to illuminate the snow with those large bivouac fires, whose smoke rises in such fantastic, spiral curls, and whose flames look like a spot of blood, at a distance, seen through the mist.

"It was one of those Bohemian quasi-matrimonial arrangements, which are often more enduring than ours, and in which a man and a woman do not part for a mere caprice, a dream, or a piece of folly.

"But by-and-by she was no longer good for anything, and had to give up appearing on the programme, for she was *enceinte*. James Stirling worked for both, and thought that he should die of grief when she was brought to bed, and, after three days of intense suffering, died with her hand in his.

"And now, all alone, crushed by grief, so ill that at times he thought his heart had stopped, the circus rider lived for the child which the dead woman had left him as a legacy. He bought a goat, so that it might have pure milk, and brought it up with such infinite, deep, womanly tenderness, that the child called him mamma, and in the circus they nicknamed him 'Mamma Stirling.'

"The boy was like his mother, and one might have said that he had brought James luck, for he had made

his mark, was receiving a good income, and appeared in every performance. Well-made and agile, and profiting by the lessons which he received at the circus, little Stirling was soon fit to appear on the posters, and the night when he made his first appearance at Franconi's, old Tom Pears, the clown, who understood such matters better than most, exclaimed:

"'My boy, you will make your way, if you don't break your neck first!'

"'I will take care of that, Monsieur Pears,' the lad replied, with a careless shrug of the shoulders.

"He was extremely daring, and when he threw himself from one trapeze to the other, in a bold flight through the air, one might almost have fancied, in the silvery electric light, that he was some fabulous bird with folded wings. He executed all his feats with unequaled, natural grace, seemingly without an effort, even when he braced his limbs of steel, and condensed all his strength in one supreme, mad leap. His chest, under its pearl-gray tights, hardly rose, and there was not a drop of perspiration on his forehead, among the light curls which framed it, like a golden halo.

"He had an almost disdainful manner of smiling at the public, in the manner of an artist who loves his profession and is amused at danger, rather than like an acrobat who is paid to amuse people after dinner. During his most difficult feats he often uttered a shrill cry, like that of some wild beast which defies the sportsman, as it falls on its prey. But one sportsman is always on the alert, and he is the *Invisible*, who closes the brightest eyes and the most youthful lips forever.

"In spite of oneself, one was excited by it, and could have wished, from a superstitious instinct, that he would not continually have that defiant cry, which seemed to afford him pleasure, on his lips. James Stirling watched over him like the mother of an actress does, a mother who knows that her daughter is in some corner, and fears those dangerous connections, in which the strongest are entangled and ruined. They lived together in a boarding-house near the Arc de Triomphe.

"It was a very simple apartment, with immense posters of every color and in every language pinned to the wall, on which the name of Stirling appeared in large, striking letters; photographs with inscriptions, and tinsel wreaths, though there were two of real laurel, covered with dust, and gradually falling to pieces.

"One night, the young fellow for the first time did not come home, and only returned in time for rehearsal, tired, with blue rims under his eyes, his lips cracked with feverish heat, and with pale cheeks, but with such a look of happiness, and such a peculiar light in his eyes, that Mamma Stirling felt as if he had been stabbed, and had not the strength to find fault with him. Emboldened, radiant, longing to give vent to the mad joy which filled his whole being, to express his sensations, and recount his happiness, like a lad talking to his elder brother, the boy told James Stirling his love intrigue from beginning to end, and how much in love he was with the light-haired girl who had clasped him in her arms, and initiated him into the pleasures of the flesh.

"It had been coming on for some time, he said. She went to every performance, and always occupied the same box. She used to send him letters by the box-opener, letters which smelled like bunches of violets, and always smiled at him when he came into the ring to bow to the public, amid the applause and recalls, and it was that smile, those red, half-open lips, which seemed to promise so many caresses and delicious words, that had attracted him like some fragrant fruit. Sometimes she came with gentlemen in evening dress, and gardenias in their button-holes, who seemed to bore her terribly, if not to disgust her. And he was happy, although he had never yet spoken to her, in the knowledge that she had not the smile for them which she had for him, and that she appeared dull and sad, like somebody who is homesick, or longing for something or some one.

"On other evenings, she used to be quite alone, with black pearls in the lobes of her small pink ears, and always got up and left her box as soon as he had finished his performance on the trapeze. The evening before she carried him off almost forcibly in her carriage, without even giving him time to get rid of his tights and the india-rubber armlets that he wore on his wrists. Oh! that return in the cold, in the semi-obscurity, through which the trembling light of the street lamps shone—that warm, exciting clasp of her arms, which imprisoned him, and by degrees drew him close to that warm body, whose slightest throb and shiver he felt, as if she had been clothed in impalpable gauze, and whose odor mounted to his head like the fumes of whisky, an odor in which there was something of everything, of the animal, of

the woman, of spices, of flowers, and of something that he did not yet divine.

"And such despotic, imperious, divine kisses were they, when she put her lips to his and kept them there, as if to make him dream of an eternity of bliss, sucking in his breath, hurting his lips, intoxicating, overwhelming him with delight, exhausting him, while she held his head in both her hands, as if in a vise. The carriage rolled on at a quick trot, through the silence of the snow, and they did not even hear the noise of the wheels, which buried themselves in that white carpet, as if it had been cotton-wool. Suddenly, however, tired and exhausted she leaned against him with closed eyes and moist lips. Then they talked at random, like people who are not quite themselves, and who have uncorked too many bottles of champagne on a benefit night.

"She questioned him, and laughed at his theatrical slang, wrapped her otter-skin rug round his legs, and murmured: 'Come close to me, darling; at any rate, you are not cold, I hope?'

"When they reached her pretty little house, with old tapestry and delicately colored plush hangings, they found supper waiting for them. She amused herself by attending to him in person, with the manners of a saucy waitress. And then there were kisses, constant, insatiable, maddening kisses, and the lad exclaimed, with glistening eyes, at the thoughts of future meetings:

"'If you only knew how pretty she is! And then, it is nicer than anything else in the world to obey her, to do whatever she wants, and to allow oneself to be loved as she wishes!'

"Mamma Stirling was very uneasy, but resigned himself to the inevitable. Seeing how infatuated the boy was, he took care not to be too sharp with him, or to keep too tight a hand upon the reins. The woman who had debauched the lad was a fast woman, and nothing else, and after all, the old stager preferred that to one of those excitable women of the world, who are as dangerous for a man as the plague, whereas a fast woman can be taken and left again, and one does not risk one's heart at the same time as one's skin, for a man knows what they are worth. Stirling was mistaken, however. Nelly d'Argine—she is married to a Yankee, now, and has gone to New York with him—was one of those vicious women whom a man can only wish his worst enemy to have, and she had merely taken a fancy to the young fellow because she was bored to death, and because her senses were roused like embers which break out again, when a fire is thought to be out.

"Unfortunately, he had taken the matter seriously, was very jealous, and as suspicious as a deer, never imagining that this love affair could come to an end. Proud, with his hot gypsy blood, he wished to be the only lover, the only master who paid, and who could not be shown the door, like a troublesome and importunate parasite.

"Stirling had saved some money, by dint of a hard struggle, and had invested it in the Funds against the rainy day when he should be too old to gain a livelihood. When he saw how madly in love his son was, and how obstinate in his lamentable folly, he gave him all his savings and deprived himself of his stout and gin, so that the boy might have money to

give to his mistress, and might continue to be happy, and not have any cares, and so between them, they kept Nelly.

"Stirling's debts accumulated, and he mortgaged his salary for years in advance to the usurers who haunt circuses as if they were gambling hells, who are on the watch for passion, poverty, and disappointment, who keep plenty of ready stamped bill paper in their pockets, as well as money, which they haggle over, coin by coin. But in spite of all this, the lad sang, made a show, and amused himself, and used to say to him, as he kissed him on both cheeks: 'How kind you are, in spite of everything!'

"In a month's time, as he was becoming too exacting — he followed her, questioned her, and worried her with perpetual scenes — Nelly found that she had had enough of her gymnast; he was a toy which she had done with and worn out, and which was now only in her way, and only worth throwing into the gutter. She was satiated with him, and became once more the tranquil woman whom nothing can move, and who baits her fishing-ground quite calmly, in order to find a husband and a fresh start. And so she turned the young fellow out of doors, as if he had been some beggar soliciting alms. He did not complain, however, and did not say anything to Mamma Stirling, but worked as he had done in the past, mastering himself with superhuman energy, so as to hide the grief that was gnawing at his heart and killing him, and the disenchantment with everything that was making him sick of life.

"Some time afterward, when there was to be a special display for the officers, seeing Nelly d'Argine

there in a box surrounded by her usual admirers, appearing indifferent to everything that was going on, and not even apparently noticing that he was performing and was being heartily applauded, he threw his trapeze forward as far as he could, at the end of his performance, and exerting all his strength, and certain that he should fall beyond the protecting net, he flung himself furiously into space.

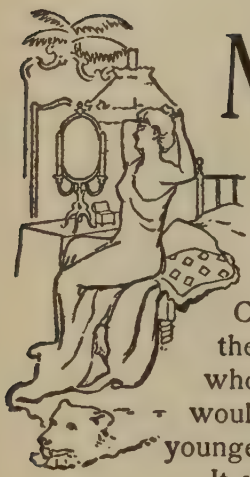
"A cry of horror resounded from one end of the house to the other, when he was picked up disfigured, and with nearly every bone in his body broken. The unfortunate young fellow was no longer breathing, his chest was crushed in, and blood-stained froth was issuing from his lips, and Nelly d'Argine made haste to leave the house with her friends, saying in a very vexed voice:

"'It is very disgusting to come in the hopes of being amused, and to witness an accident!'

"And Mamma Stirling, who was ruined and in utter despair, and who cared for nothing more in this world, took to drinking, used to get constantly drunk, and rolled from public-house to public-house, and bar to bar, and as the worst glass of vitriol still cost a penny, he became reduced to undertaking the part which you have seen, to dabble in the water, to blacken himself, and to allow himself to be bitten.

"Ah! What a wretched thing life is for those who are kind, and who have too much heart!"

MADAME TELLIER'S EXCURSION



MEN went there every evening at about eleven o'clock, just as they went to the *café*. Six or eight of them used to meet there; always the same set, not fast men, but respectable tradesmen, and young men in government or some other employ; and they used to drink their Chartreuse, and tease the girls, or else they would talk seriously with Madame, whom everybody respected, and then would go home at twelve o'clock! The younger men would sometimes stay the night.

It was a small, comfortable house, at the corner of a street behind Saint Etienne's church. From the windows one could see the docks, full of ships which were being unloaded, and on the hill the old, gray chapel, dedicated to the Virgin.

Madame, who came of a respectable family of peasant proprietors in the department of the Eure, had taken up her profession, just as she would have become a milliner or dressmaker. The prejudice

against prostitution, which is so violent and deeply rooted in large towns, does not exist in the country places in Normandy. The peasant simply says: "It is a paying business," and sends his daughter to keep a harem of fast girls, just as he would send her to keep a girls' school.

She had inherited the house from an old uncle, to whom it had belonged. Monsieur and Madame, who had formerly been innkeepers near Yvetot, had immediately sold their house, as they thought that the business at Fécamp was more profitable. They arrived one fine morning to assume the direction of the enterprise, which was declining on account of the absence of a head. They were good people enough in their way, and soon made themselves liked by their staff and their neighbors.

Monsieur died of apoplexy two years later, for as his new profession kept him in idleness and without exercise, he had grown excessively stout, and his health had suffered. Since Madame had been a widow, all the frequenters of the establishment had wanted her; but people said that personally she was quite virtuous, and even the girls in the house could not discover anything against her. She was tall, stout, and affable, and her complexion, which had become pale in the dimness of her house, the shutters of which were scarcely ever opened, shone as if it had been varnished. She had a fringe of curly, false hair, which gave her a juvenile look, which in turn contrasted strongly with her matronly figure. She was always smiling and cheerful, and was fond of a joke, but there was a shade of reserve about her which her new occupation had not quite made her lose. Coarse

words always shocked her, and when any young fellow who had been badly brought up called her establishment by its right name, she was angry and disgusted.

In a word, she had a refined mind, and although she treated her women as friends, yet she very frequently used to say that she and they were not made of the same stuff.

Sometimes during the week she would hire a carriage and take some of her girls into the country, where they used to enjoy themselves on the grass by the side of the little river. They behaved like a lot of girls let out from a school, and used to run races, and play childish games. They would have a cold dinner on the grass, and drink cider, and go home at night with a delicious feeling of fatigue, and in the carriage kiss Madame as a kind mother who was full of goodness and complaisance.

The house had two entrances. At the corner there was a sort of low *café*, which sailors and the lower orders frequented at night, and she had two girls whose special duty it was to attend to that part of the business. With the assistance of the waiter, whose name was Frederic, and who was a short, light-haired, beardless fellow, as strong as a horse, they set the half bottles of wine and the jugs of beer on the shaky marble tables and then, sitting astride on the customers' knees, would urge them to drink.

The three other girls (there were only five in all), formed a kind of aristocracy, and were reserved for the company on the first floor, unless they were wanted downstairs, and there was nobody on the first floor. The salon of Jupiter, where the

tradesmen used to meet, was papered in blue, and embellished with a large drawing representing Leda stretched out under the swan. That room was reached by a winding staircase, which ended at a narrow door opening on to the street, and above it, all night long a little lamp burned, behind wire bars, such as one still sees in some towns, at the foot of the shrine of some saint.

The house, which was old and damp, rather smelled of mildew. At times there was an odor of eau de Cologne in the passages, or a half open door downstairs allowed the noise of the common men sitting and drinking downstairs to reach the first floor, much to the disgust of the gentlemen who were there. Madame, who was quite familiar with those of her customers with whom she was on friendly terms, did not leave the salon. She took much interest in what was going on in the town, and they regularly told her all the news. Her serious conversation was a change from the ceaseless chatter of the three women; it was a rest from the doubtful jokes of those stout individuals who every evening indulged in the common-place amusement of drinking a glass of liquor in company with girls of easy virtue.

The names of the girls on the first floor were Fernande, Raphaelle, and Rosa "the Jade." As the staff was limited, Madame had endeavored that each member of it should be a pattern, an epitome of each feminine type, so that every customer might find as nearly as possible, the realization of his ideal. Fernande represented the handsome blonde; she was very tall, rather fat, and lazy; a country girl, who could not get rid of her freckles, and whose short,

light, almost colorless, tow-like hair, which was like combed-out flax, barely covered her head.

Raphaelle, who came from Marseilles, played the indispensable part of the handsome Jewess. She was thin, with high cheek-bones covered with rouge, and her black hair, which was always covered with pomatum, curled on to her forehead. Her eyes would have been handsome, if the right one had not had a speck in it. Her Roman nose came down over a square jaw, where two false upper teeth contrasted strangely with the bad color of the rest.

Rosa the Jade was a little roll of fat, nearly all stomach, with very short legs. From morning till night she sang songs, which were alternately indecent or sentimental, in a harsh voice, told silly, interminable tales, and only stopped talking in order to eat, or left off eating in order to talk. She was never still, was as active as a squirrel, in spite of her fat and her short legs; and her laugh, which was a torrent of shrill cries, resounded here and there, ceaselessly, in a bedroom, in the loft, in the *café*, everywhere, and always about nothing.

The two women on the ground floor were Louise, who was nicknamed "la Cocotte,"* and Flora, whom they called "Balançière,"† because she limped a little. The former always dressed as Liberty, with a tricolored sash, and the other as a Spanish woman, with a string of copper coins which jingled at every step she took, in her carroty hair. Both looked like cooks dressed up for the carnival, and were like all other women of the lower orders, neither uglier nor

*Slang for a lady of easy virtue.

†Swing, or seesaw,

better looking than they usually are. In fact they looked just like servants at an inn, and were generally called "the Two Pumps."

A jealous peace, very rarely disturbed, reigned among these five women, thanks to Madame's conciliatory wisdom and to her constant good humor; and the establishment, which was the only one of the kind in the little town, was very much frequented. Madame had succeeded in giving it such a respectable appearance; she was so amiable and obliging to everybody, her good heart was so well known, that she was treated with a certain amount of consideration. The regular customers spent money on her, and were delighted when she was especially friendly toward them. When they met during the day, they would say: "This evening, you know where," just as men say: "At the *café*, after dinner." In a word Madame Tellier's house was somewhere to go to, and her customers very rarely missed their daily meetings there.

One evening, toward the end of May, the first arrival, Monsieur Poulin, who was a timber merchant, and had been mayor, found the door shut. The little lantern behind the grating was not alight; there was not a sound in the house; everything seemed dead. He knocked, gently at first, and then more loudly, but nobody answered the door. Then he went slowly up the street, and when he got to the market place, he met Monsieur Duvert, the gun-maker, who was going to the same place, so they went back together, but did not meet with any better success. But suddenly they heard a loud noise close to them, and on going round the corner of the house, they saw a

number of English and French sailors, who were hammering at the closed shutters of the *café* with their fists.

The two tradesmen immediately made their escape, for fear of being compromised, but a low *Pst* stopped them; it was Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who had recognized them, and was trying to attract their attention. They told him what had happened, and he was all the more vexed at it, as he, a married man, and father of a family, only went there on Saturdays—*securitatis causa*, as he said, alluding to a measure of sanitary policy, which his friend Doctor Borde had advised him to observe. That was his regular evening, and now he would be deprived of it for the whole week.

The three men went as far as the quay together, and on the way they met young Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, who frequented the place regularly, and Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector. They all returned to the Rue aux Juifs together, to make a last attempt. But the exasperated sailors were besieging the house, throwing stones at the shutters, and shouting, and the five first-floor customers went away as quickly as possible, and walked aimlessly about the streets.

Presently they met Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and then Monsieur Vassi, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and they all took a long walk, going to the pier first of all. There they sat down in a row on the granite parapet, and watched the rising tide, and when the promenaders had sat there for some time, Monsieur Tournevau said: "This is not very amusing!"

"Decidedly not," Monsieur Pinipesse replied, and they started off to walk again.

After going through the street on the top of the hill, they returned over the wooden bridge which crosses the Retenue, passed close to the railway, and came out again on to the market place, when suddenly a quarrel arose between Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Tournevau, about an edible fungus which one of them declared he had found in the neighborhood.

As they were out of temper already from annoyance, they would very probably have come to blows, if the others had not interfered. Monsieur Pinipesse went off furious, and soon another altercation arose between the ex-mayor, Monsieur Poulin, and Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, on the subject of the tax-collector's salary, and the profits which he might make. Insulting remarks were freely passing between them, when a torrent of formidable cries were heard, and the body of sailors, who were tired of waiting so long outside a closed house, came into the square. They were walking arm-in-arm, two and two, and formed a long procession, and were shouting furiously. The landsmen went and hid themselves under a gateway, and the yelling crew disappeared in the direction of the abbey. For a long time they still heard the noise, which diminished like a storm in the distance, and then silence was restored. Monsieur Poulin and Monsieur Dupuis, who were enraged with each other, went in different directions, without wishing each other good-bye.

The other four set off again, and instinctively went in the direction of Madame Tellier's establishment, which was still closed, silent, impenetrable.

A quiet, but obstinate, drunken man was knocking at the door of the *café;* then he stopped and called Frederic, the waiter, in a low voice, but finding that he got no answer, he sat down on the doorstep, and awaited the course of events.

The others were just going to retire, when the noisy band of sailors reappeared at the end of the street. The French sailors were shouting the "Marseillaise," and the Englishmen, "Rule Britannia." There was a general lurching against the wall, and then the drunken brutes went on their way toward the quay, where a fight broke out between the two nations, in the course of which an Englishman had his arm broken, and a Frenchman his nose split.

The drunken man, who had stopped outside the door, was crying by this time, as drunken men and children cry when they are vexed, and the others went away. By degrees, calm was restored in the noisy town; here and there, at moments, the distant sound of voices could be heard, only to die away in the distance.

One man was still wandering about, Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who was vexed at having to wait until the next Saturday. He hoped for something to turn up, he did not know what; but he was exasperated at the police for thus allowing an establishment of such public utility, which they had under their control, to be thus closed.

He went back to it, examined the walls, and tried to find out the reason. On the shutter he saw a notice stuck up, so he struck a wax vesta, and read the following, in a large, uneven hand: "Closed on account of the Confirmation."

Then he went away, as he saw it was useless to remain, and left the drunken man lying on the pavement fast asleep, outside the inhospitable door.

The next day, all the regular customers, one after the other, found some reason for going through the Rue aux Juifs with a bundle of papers under their arm, to keep them in countenance, and with a furtive glance they all read that mysterious notice:

"Closed on Account of the Confirmation."

II.

Madame had a brother, who was a carpenter in their native place, Virville, in the department of Eure. When Madame had still kept the inn at Yvetot, she had stood godmother to that brother's daughter, who had received the name of Constance, Constance Rivet; she herself being a Rivet on her father's side. The carpenter, who knew that his sister was in a good position, did not lose sight of her, although they did not meet often, as they were both kept at home by their occupations, and lived a long way from each other. But when the girl was twelve years old, and about to be confirmed, he seized the opportunity to write to his sister, and ask her to come and be present at the ceremony. Their old parents were dead, and as Madame could not well refuse, she accepted the invitation. Her brother, whose name was Joseph, hoped that by dint of showing his sister attentions,

she might be induced to make her will in the girl's favor, as she had no children of her own.

His sister's occupation did not trouble his scruples in the least, and, besides, nobody knew anything about it at Virville. When they spoke of her, they only said: "Madame Tellier is living at Fécamp," which might mean that she was living on her own private income. It was quite twenty leagues from Fécamp to Virville, and for a peasant, twenty leagues on land are more than is crossing the ocean to an educated person. The people at Virville had never been further than Rouen, and nothing attracted the people from Fécamp to a village of five hundred houses, in the middle of a plain, and situated in another department. At any rate, nothing was known about her business.

But the Confirmation was coming on, and Madame was in great embarrassment. She had no under-mistress, and did not at all care to leave her house, even for a day. She feared the rivalries between the girls upstairs and those downstairs would certainly break out; that Frederic would get drunk, for when he was in that state, he would knock anybody down for a mere word. At last, however, she made up her mind to take them all with her, with the exception of the man, to whom she gavè a holiday, until the next day but one.

When she asked her brother, he made no objection, but undertook to put them all up for a night. So on Saturday morning the eight o'clock express carried off Madame and her companions in a second-class carriage. As far as Beuzeille they were alone, and chattered like magpies, but at that station a

couple got in. The man, an aged peasant dressed in a blue blouse with a folding collar, wide sleeves tight at the wrist, and ornamented with white embroidery, wore an old high hat with long nap. He held an enormous green umbrella in one hand, and a large basket in the other, from which the heads of three frightened ducks protruded. The woman, who sat stiffly in her rustic finery, had a face like a fowl, and with a nose that was as pointed as a bill. She sat down opposite her husband and did not stir, as she was startled at finding herself in such smart company.

There was certainly an array of striking colors in the carriage. Madame was dressed in blue silk from head to foot, and had over her dress a dazzling red shawl of imitation French cashmere. Fernande was panting in a Scottish plaid dress, whose bodice, which her companions had laced as tight as they could, had forced up her falling bosom into a double dome, that was continually heaving up and down, and which seemed liquid beneath the material. Raphaelle, with a bonnet covered with feathers, so that it looked like a nest full of birds, had on a lilac dress with gold spots on it; there was something Oriental about it that suited her Jewish face. Rosa the Jade had on a pink petticoat with large flounces, and looked like a very fat child, an obese dwarf; while the Two Pumps looked as if they had cut their dresses out of old, flowered curtains, dating from the Restoration.

Perceiving that they were no longer alone in the compartment, the ladies put on staid looks, and began to talk of subjects which might give the others a high opinion of them. But at Bolbec a gentleman with light whiskers, with a gold chain, and wearing two

or three rings, got in, and put several parcels wrapped in oil cloth into the net over his head. He looked inclined for a joke, and a good-natured fellow.

"Are you ladies changing your quarters?" he asked. The question embarrassed them all considerably. Madame, however, quickly recovered her composure, and said sharply, to avenge the honor of her corps:

"I think you might try and be polite!"

He excused himself, and said: "I beg your pardon, I ought to have said your nunnery."

As Madame could not think of a retort, or perhaps as she thought herself justified sufficiently, she gave him a dignified bow, and pinched in her lips.

Then the gentleman, who was sitting between Rosa the Jade and the old peasant, began to wink knowingly at the ducks, whose heads were sticking out of the basket. When he felt that he had fixed the attention of his public, he began to tickle them under their bills, and spoke funnily to them, to make the company smile.

"We have left our little pond, qu-ack! qu-ack! to make the acquaintance of the little spit, qu-ack! qu-ack!"

The unfortunate creatures turned their necks away to avoid his caresses, and made desperate efforts to get out of their wicker prison, and then, suddenly, all at once, uttered the most lamentable quacks of distress. The women exploded with laughter. They leaned forward and pushed each other, so as to see better; they were very much interested in the ducks, and the gentleman redoubled his airs, his wit, and his teasing.

Rosa joined in, and leaning over her neighbor's legs, she kissed the three animals on the head. Immediately all the girls wanted to kiss them in turn, and the gentleman took them on to his knees, made them jump up and down and pinched them. The two peasants, who were even in greater consternation than their poultry, rolled their eyes as if they were possessed, without venturing to move, and their old wrinkled faces had not a smile nor a movement.

Then the gentleman, who was a commercial traveler, offered the ladies braces by way of a joke, and taking up one of his packages, he opened it. It was a trick, for the parcel contained garters. There were blue silk, pink silk, red silk, violet silk, mauve silk garters, and the buckles were made of two gilt metal Cupids, embracing each other. The girls uttered exclamations of delight, and looked at them with that gravity which is natural to a woman when she is hankering after a bargain. They consulted one another by their looks or in a whisper, and replied in the same manner, and Madame was longingly handling a pair of orange garters that were broader and more imposing than the rest; really fit for the mistress of such an establishment.

The gentleman waited, for he was nourishing an idea.

"Come, my kittens," he said, "you must try them on."

There was a torrent of exclamations, and they squeezed their petticoats between their legs, as if they thought he was going to ravish them, but he quietly waited his time, and said: "Well, if you will not, I shall pack them up again."

And he added cunningly: "I offer any pair they like, to those who will try them on."

But they would not, and sat up very straight, and looked dignified.

But the Two Pumps looked so distressed that he renewed the offer to them. Flora especially hesitated, and he pressed her:

"Come, my dear, a little courage! Just look at that lilac pair; it will suit your dress admirably."

That decided her, and pulling up her dress she showed a thick leg fit for a milk-maid, in a badly-fitting, coarse stocking. The commercial traveler stooped down and fastened the garter below the knee first of all and then above it; and he tickled the girl gently, which made her scream and jump. When he had done, he gave her the lilac pair, and asked: "Who next?"

"I! I!" they all shouted at once, and he began on Rosa the Jade, who uncovered a shapeless, round thing without any ankle, a regular "sausage of a leg," as Raphaelle used to say.

The commercial traveler complimented Fernande, and grew quite enthusiastic over her powerful columns.

The thin tibias of the handsome Jewess met with less flattery, and Louise Cocotte, by way of a joke, put her petticoats over the man's head, so that Madame was obliged to interfere to check such unseemly behavior.

Lastly, Madame herself put out her leg, a handsome, muscular, Norman leg, and in his surprise and pleasure the commercial traveler gallantly took off his hat to salute that master calf, like a true French cavalier.

The two peasants, who were speechless from surprise, looked askance, out of the corners of their eyes. They looked so exactly like fowls, that the man with the light whiskers, when he sat up, said "Co—co—ri—co," under their very noses, and that gave rise to another storm of amusement.

The old people got out at Motteville, with their basket, their ducks, and their umbrella, and they heard the woman say to her husband, as they went away:

"They are sluts, who are off to that cursed place, Paris."

The funny commercial traveler himself got out at Rouen, after behaving so coarsely that Madame was obliged sharply to put him into his right place. She added, as a moral: "This will teach us not to talk to the first comer."

At Oissel they changed trains, and at a little station further on Monsieur Joseph Rivet was waiting for them with a large cart and a number of chairs in it, which was drawn by a white horse.

The carpenter politely kissed all the ladies, and then helped them into his conveyance.

Three of them sat on three chairs at the back, Raphaelle, Madame, and her brother on the three chairs in front, and Rosa, who had no seat, settled herself as comfortably as she could on tall Fernande's knees, and then they set off.

But the horse's jerky trot shook the cart so terribly, that the chairs began to dance, throwing the travelers into the air, to the right and to the left, as if they had been dancing puppets. This made them make horrible grimaces and screams, which, however, were cut short by another jolt of the cart.

They clung to the sides of the vehicle, their bonnets fell on to their backs, their noses on their shoulders, and the white horse trotted on, stretching out his head and holding out his tail quite straight, a little hairless rat's tail, with which he whisked his buttocks from time to time.

Joseph Rivet, with one leg on the shafts and the other bent under him, held the reins with elbows high and kept uttering a kind of chuckling sound, which made the horse prick up its ears and go faster.

The green country extended on either side of the road, and here and there the colza in flower presented a waving expanse of yellow, from which there arose a strong, wholesome, sweet and penetrating smell, which the wind carried to some distance.

The cornflowers showed their little blue heads among the rye, and the women wanted to pick them, but Monsieur Rivet refused to stop.

Then sometimes a whole field appeared to be covered with blood, so thickly were the poppies growing, and the cart, which looked as if it were filled with flowers of more brilliant hue, drove on through the fields colored with wild flowers, to disappear behind the trees of a farm, then to reappear and go on again through the yellow or green standing crops studded with red or blue.

One o'clock struck as they drove up to the carpenter's door. They were tired out, and very hungry, as they had eaten nothing since they left home. Madame Rivet ran out, and made them alight, one after another, kissing them as soon as they were on the ground. She seemed as if she would never tire of kissing her sister-in-law, whom she apparently

wanted to monopolize. They had lunch in the workshop, which had been cleared out for the next day's dinner.

A capital omelette, followed by boiled chitterlings, and washed down by good, sharp cider, made them all feel comfortable.

Rivet had taken a glass so that he might hob-nob with them, and his wife cooked, waited on them, brought in the dishes, took them out, and asked all of them in a whisper whether they had everything they wanted. A number of boards standing against the walls, and heaps of shavings that had been swept into the corners, gave out the smell of planed wood, of carpentering, that resinous odor which penetrates the lungs.

They wanted to see the little girl, but she had gone to church, and would not be back until evening, so they all went out for a stroll in the country.

It was a small village, through which the high road passed. Ten or a dozen houses on either side of the single street had for tenants the butcher, the grocer, the carpenter, the innkeeper, the shoemaker, and the baker, and others.

The church was at the end of the street. It was surrounded by a small churchyard, and four enormous lime-trees, which stood just outside the porch, shaded it completely. It was built of flint, in no particular style, and had a slated steeple. When you got past it, you were in the open country again, which was broken here and there by clumps of trees which hid some homestead.

Rivet had given his arm to his sister, out of politeness, although he was in his working clothes,

and was walking with her majestically. His wife, who was overwhelmed by Raphaelle's gold-striped dress, was walking between her and Fernande, and rotund Rosa was trotting behind with Louise Cocotte and Flora, the see-saw, who was limping along, quite tired out.

The inhabitants came to their doors, the children left off playing, and a window curtain would be raised, so as to show a muslin cap, while an old woman with a crutch, who was almost blind, crossed herself as if it were a religious procession. They all looked for a long time after those handsome ladies from the town, who had come so far to be present at the confirmation of Joseph Rivet's little girl, and the carpenter rose very much in the public estimation.

As they passed the church, they heard some children singing; little shrill voices were singing a hymn, but Madame would not let them go in, for fear of disturbing the little cherubs.

After a walk, during which Joseph Rivet enumerated the principal landed proprietors, spoke about the yield of the land, and the productiveness of the cows and sheep, he took his flock of women home and installed them in his house, and as it was very small, he had put them into the rooms, two and two.

Just for once, Rivet would sleep in the workshop on the shavings; his wife was going to share her bed with her sister-in-law, and Fernande and Raphaelle were to sleep together in the next room. Louise and Flora were put into the kitchen, where they had a mattress on the floor, and Rosa had a

little dark cupboard at the top of the stairs to herself, close to the loft, where the candidate for confirmation was to sleep.

When the girl came in, she was overwhelmed with kisses; all the women wished to caress her, with that need of tender expansion, that habit of professional wheedling, which had made them kiss the ducks in the railway carriage.

They took her on to their laps, stroked her soft, light hair, and pressed her in their arms with vehement and spontaneous outbursts of affection, and the child, who was very good-natured and docile, bore it all patiently.

As the day had been a fatiguing one for everybody, they all went to bed soon after dinner. The whole village was wrapped in that perfect stillness of the country, which is almost like a religious silence, and the girls, who were accustomed to the noisy evenings of their establishment, felt rather impressed by the perfect repose of the sleeping village. They shivered, not with cold, but with those little shivers of solitude which come over uneasy and troubled hearts.

As soon as they were in bed, two and two together, they clasped each other in their arms, as if to protect themselves against this feeling of the calm and profound slumber of the earth. But Rosa the Jade, who was alone in her little dark cupboard, felt a vague and painful emotion come over her.

She was tossing about in bed, unable to get to sleep, when she heard the faint sobs of a crying child close to her head, through the partition. She was frightened, and called out, and was answered by a

weak voice, broken by sobs. It was the little girl who, being used to sleeping in her mother's room, was frightened in her small attic.

Rosa was delighted, got up softly so as not to awaken anyone, and went and fetched the child. She took her into her warm bed, kissed her and pressed her to her bosom, caressed her, lavished exaggerated manifestations of tenderness on her, and at last grew calmer herself and went to sleep. And till morning, the candidate for confirmation slept with her head on Rosa's naked bosom.

At five o'clock, the little church bell ringing the "Angelus" woke these women up, who as a rule slept the whole morning long.

The peasants were up already, and the women went busily from house to house, carefully bringing short, starched, muslin dresses in bandboxes, or very long wax tapers, with a bow of silk fringed with gold in the middle, and with dents in the wax for the fingers.

The sun was already high in the blue sky, which still had a rosy tint toward the horizon, like a faint trace of dawn, remaining. Families of fowls were walking about the henhouses, and here and there a black cock, with a glistening breast, raised his head, crowned by his red comb, flapped his wings, and uttered his shrill crow, which the other cocks repeated.

Vehicles of all sorts came from neighboring parishes, and discharged tall, Norman women, in dark dresses, with neck-handkerchiefs crossed over the bosom, and fastened with silver brooches, a hundred years old.

The men had put on blouses over their new frock coats, or over their old dress coats of green cloth, the tails of which hung down below their blouses. When the horses were in the stable, there was a double line of rustic conveyances along the road; carts, cabriolets, tilburies, char-à-bancs, traps of every shape and age, resting on their shafts, or pointing them in the air.

The carpenter's house was as busy as a beehive. The ladies, in dressing jackets and petticoats, with their long, thin, light hair, which looked as if it were faded and worn by dyeing, were busy dressing the child, who was standing motionless on a table, while Madame Tellier was directing the movements of her battalion. They washed her, did her hair, dressed her, and with the help of a number of pins, they arranged the folds of her dress, and took in the waist, which was too large.

Then, when she was ready, she was told to sit down and not to move, and the women hurried off to get ready themselves.

The church bell began to ring again, and its tinkle was lost in the air, like a feeble voice which is soon drowned in space. The candidates came out of the houses, and went toward the parochial building which contained the school and the mansion house. This stood quite at one end of the village, while the church was situated at the other.

The parents, in their very best clothes, followed their children with awkward looks, and with the clumsy movements of bodies that are always bent at work.

The little girls disappeared in a cloud of muslin,

which looked like whipped cream, while the lads, who looked like embryo waiters in a *café*, and whose heads shone with pomatum, walked with their legs apart, so as not to get any dust or dirt on to their black trousers.

It was something for the family to be proud of; a large number of relatives from distant parts surrounded the child, and, consequently, the carpenter's triumph was complete.

Madame Tellier's regiment, with its mistress at its head, followed Constance; her father gave his arm to his sister, her mother walked by the side of Raphaelle, Fernande with Rosa, and the Two Pumps together. Thus they walked majestically through the village, like a general's staff in full uniform, while the effect on the village was startling.

At the school, the girls arranged themselves under the Sister of Mercy, and the boys under the schoolmaster, and they started off, singing a hymn as they went. The boys led the way, in two files, between the two rows of vehicles, from which the horses had been taken out, and the girls followed in the same order. As all the people in the village had given the town ladies the precedence out of politeness, they came immediately behind the girls, and lengthened the double line of the procession still more, three on the right and three on the left, while their dresses were as striking as a bouquet of fireworks.

When they went into the church, the congregation grew quite excited. They pressed against each other, they turned round, they jostled one another in order to see. Some of the devout ones almost spoke aloud, so astonished were they at the sight of these

ladies, whose dresses were trimmed more elaborately than the priest's chasuble.

The Mayor offered them his pew, the first one on the right, close to the choir, and Madame Tellier sat there with her sister-in-law; Fernande and Raphaelle, Rosa the Jade, and the Two Pumps occupied the second seat, in company with the carpenter.

The choir was full of kneeling children, the girls on one side, and the boys on the other, and the long wax tapers which they held, looked like lances, pointing in all directions. Three men were standing in front of the lecturn, singing as loud as they could.

They prolonged the syllables of the sonorous Latin indefinitely, holding on to the Amens with interminable *a—a's*, which the serpent of the organ kept up in the monotonous, long-drawn-out notes, emitted by the deep-throated pipes.

A child's shrill voice took up the reply, and from time to time a priest sitting in a stall and wearing a biretta, got up, muttered something, and sat down again. The three singers continued, with their eyes fixed on the big book of plain-song lying open before them on the outstretched wings of an eagle, mounted on a pivot.

Then silence ensued. The service went on, and toward the end of it, Rosa, with her head in both her hands, suddenly thought of her mother, and her village church on a similar occasion. She almost fancied that that day had returned, when she was so small, and almost hidden in her white dress, and she began to cry.

First of all she wept silently, the tears dropped slowly from her eyes, but her emotion increased with

her recollections, and she began to sob. She took out her pocket-handkerchief, wiped her eyes, and held it to her mouth, so as not to scream, but it was useless.

A sort of rattle escaped her throat, and she was answered by two other profound, heart-breaking sobs; for her two neighbors, Louise and Flora, who were kneeling near her, overcome by similar recollections, were sobbing by her side. There was a flood of tears, and as weeping is contagious, Madame soon found that her eyes were wet, and on turning to her sister-in-law, she saw that all the occupants of the pew were crying.

Soon, throughout the church, here and there, a wife, a mother, a sister, seized by the strange sympathy of poignant emotion, and agitated by the grief of those handsome ladies on their knees, who were shaken by their sobs, was moistening her cambric pocket-handkerchief, and pressing her beating heart with her left hand.

Just as the sparks from an engine will set fire to dry grass, so the tears of Rosa and of her companions infected the whole congregation in a moment. Men, women, old men, and lads in new blouses were soon sobbing; something superhuman seemed to be hovering over their heads—a spirit, the powerful breath of an invisible and all-powerful being.

Suddenly a species of madness seemed to pervade the church, the noise of a crowd in a state of frenzy, a tempest of sobs and of stifled cries. It passed over the people like gusts of wind which bow the trees in a forest, and the priest, overcome by emotion, stammered out incoherent prayers, those inarticulate prayers of the soul, when it soars toward heaven.

The people behind him gradually grew calmer. The cantors, in all the dignity of their white surplices, went on in somewhat uncertain voices, and the organ itself seemed hoarse, as if the instrument had been weeping. The priest, however, raised his hand, as a sign for them to be still, and went to the chancel steps. All were silent, immediately.

After a few remarks on what had just taken place, which he attributed to a miracle, he continued, turning to the seats where the carpenter's guests were sitting:

"I especially thank you, my dear sisters, who have come from such a distance, and whose presence among us, whose evident faith and ardent piety have set such a salutary example to all. You have edified my parish; your emotion has warmed all hearts; without you, this day would not, perhaps, have had this really divine character. It is sufficient, at times, that there should be one chosen to keep in the flock, to make the whole flock blessed."

His voice failed him again, from emotion, and he said no more, but concluded the service.

They all left the church as quickly as possible; the children themselves were restless, tired with such a prolonged tension of the mind. Besides, the elders were hungry, and one after another left the churchyard, to see about dinner.

There was a crowd outside, a noisy crowd, a babel of loud voices, in which the shrill Norman accent was discernible. The villagers formed two ranks, and when the children appeared, each family seized their own.

The whole houseful of women caught hold of

Constance, surrounded her and kissed her, and Rosa was especially demonstrative. At last she took hold of one hand, while Madame Tellier held the other, and Raphaelle and Fernande held up her long muslin petticoat, so that it might not drag in the dust. Louise and Flora brought up the rear with Madame Rivet, and the child, who was very silent and thoughtful, set off home, in the midst of this guard of honor.

The dinner was served in the workshop, on long boards supported by trestles, and through the open door they could see all the enjoyment that was going on. Everywhere people were feasting; through every window could be seen tables surrounded by people in their Sunday clothes. There was merriment in every house—men sitting in their shirt sleeves, drinking cider, glass after glass.

In the carpenter's house the gaiety took on somewhat of an air of reserve, the consequence of the emotion of the girls in the morning. Rivet was the only one who was in good cue, and he was drinking to excess. Madame Tellier was looking at the clock every moment, for, in order not to lose two days following, they ought to take the 3.55 train, which would bring them to Fécamp by dark.

The carpenter tried very hard to distract her attention, so as to keep his guests until the next day. But he did not succeed, for she never joked when there was business to be done, and as soon as they had had their coffee she ordered her girls to make haste and get ready. Then, turning to her brother, she said:

"You must have the horse put in immediately," and she herself went to complete her preparations.

When she came down again, her sister-in-law was waiting to speak to her about the child, and a long conversation took place, in which, however, nothing was settled. The carpenter's wife finessed, and pretended to be very much moved, and Madame Tellier, who was holding the girl on her knees, would not pledge herself to anything definite, but merely gave vague promises: she would not forget her, there was plenty of time, and then, they were sure to meet again.

But the conveyance did not come to the door, and the women did not come downstairs. Upstairs, they even heard loud laughter, falls, little screams, and much clapping of hands, and so, while the carpenter's wife went to the stable to see whether the cart was ready, Madame went upstairs.

Rivet, who was very drunk and half undressed, was vainly trying to kiss Rosa, who was choking with laughter. The Two Pumps were holding him by the arms and trying to calm him, as they were shocked at such a scene after that morning's ceremony; but Raphaelle and Fernande were urging him on, writhing and holding their sides with laughter, and they uttered shrill cries at every useless attempt that the drunken fellow made.

The man was furious, his face was red, his dress disordered, and he was trying to shake off the two women who were clinging to him, while he was pulling Rosa's bodice, with all his might, and ejaculating: "Won't you, you slut?"

But Madame, who was very indignant, went up to her brother, seized him by the shoulders, and threw him out of the room with such violence that he fell

against a wall in the passage, and a minute afterward, they heard him pumping water on to his head in the yard. When he came back with the cart, he was already quite calmed down.

They seated themselves in the same way as they had done the day before, and the little white horse started off with his quick, dancing trot. Under the hot sun, their fun, which had been checked during dinner, broke out again. The girls now were amused at the jolts which the wagon gave, pushed their neighbors' chairs, and burst out laughing every moment, for they were in the vein for it, after Rivet's vain attempt.

There was a haze over the country, the roads were glaring, and dazzled their eyes. The wheels raised up two trails of dust, which followed the cart for a long time along the highroad, and presently Fernande, who was fond of music, asked Rosa to sing something. She boldly struck up the "Gros Curé de Meudon," but Madame made her stop immediately, as she thought it a song which was very unsuitable for such a day, and added:

"Sing us something of Béranger's."

After a moment's hesitation, Rosa began Béranger's song, "The Grandmother," in her worn-out voice, and all the girls, and even Madame herself, joined in the chorus:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My well-made legs,
And my vanished charms."

"That is first-rate," Rivet declared, carried away by the rhythm. They shouted the refrain to every

verse, while Rivet beat time on the shafts with his foot, and on the horse's back with the reins. The animal, himself, carried away by the rhythm, broke into a wild gallop, and threw all the women in a heap, one on the top of the other, in the bottom of the conveyance.

They got up, laughing as if they were crazy, and the song went on, shouted at the top of their voices, beneath the burning sky and among the ripening grain, to the rapid gallop of the little horse, who set off every time the refrain was sung, and galloped a hundred yards, to their great delight. Occasionally a stone breaker by the roadside sat up, and looked at the wild and shouting female load, through his wire spectacles.

When they got out at the station, the carpenter said:

"I am sorry you are going; we might have had some fun together."

But Madame replied very sensibly: "Everything has its right time, and we cannot always be enjoying ourselves."

And then he had a sudden inspiration: "Look here, I will come and see you at Fécamp next month." And he gave a knowing look, with his bright and roguish eyes.

"Come," Madame said, "you must be sensible; you may come if you like, but you are not to be up to any of your tricks."

He did not reply, and as they heard the whistle of the train he immediately began to kiss them all. When it came to Rosa's turn, he tried to get to her mouth, which she, however, smiling with her lips

closed, turned away from him each time by a rapid movement of her head to one side. He held her in his arms, but he could not attain his object, as his large whip, which he was holding in his hand and waving behind the girl's back in desperation, interfered with his efforts.

"Passengers for Rouen, take your seats, please!" a guard cried, and they got in. There was a slight whistle followed by a loud one from the engine, which noisily puffed out its first jet of steam, while the wheels began to turn a little, with visible effort. Rivet left the station and went to the gate by the side of the line to get another look at Rosa, and as the carriage full of human merchandise passed him, he began to crack his whip and to jump, singing at the top of his voice:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My well-made legs,
And my vanished charms!"

And then he watched a white pocket-handkerchief, which somebody was waving, as it disappeared in the distance.

III.

They slept the peaceful sleep of quiet consciences, until they got to Rouen. When they returned to the house, refreshed and rested, Madame could not help saying:

"It was all very well, but I was already longing to get home."

They hurried over their supper, and then, when they had put on their usual light evening costumes, waited for their usual customers. The little colored lamp outside the door told the passers-by that the flock had returned to the fold, and in a moment the news spread, nobody knew how, or by whom.

Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, even carried his audacity so far as to send a special messenger to Monsieur Tournevau, who was in the bosom of his family.

The fish-curer used every Sunday to have several cousins to dinner, and they were having coffee, when a man came in with a letter in his hand. Monsieur Tournevau was much excited; he opened the envelope and grew pale; it only contained these words in pencil:

"The cargo of fish has been found; the ship has come into port; good business for you. Come immediately."

He felt in his pockets, gave the messenger twopence, and suddenly blushing to his ears, he said: "I must go out." He handed his wife the laconic and mysterious note, rang the bell, and when the servant came in, he asked her to bring him his hat and overcoat immediately. As soon as he was in the street, he began to run, and the way seemed to him to be twice as long as usual, in consequence of his impatience.

Madame Tellier's establishment had put on quite a holiday look. On the ground floor, a number of sailors were making a deafening noise, and Louise and Flora drank with one and the other, so as to merit their name of the Two Pumps more than ever.

They were being called for everywhere at once; already they were not quite sober enough for their business, and the night bid fair to be a very jolly one.

The upstairs room was full by nine o'clock. Monsieur Vassi, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, Madame's usual Platonic wooer, was talking to her in a corner, in a low voice, and they were both smiling, as if they were about to come to an understanding.

Monsieur Poulin, the ex-mayor, was holding Rosa on his knees; and she, with her nose close to his, was running her hands through the old gentleman's white whiskers.

Tall Fernande, who was lying on the sofa, had both her feet on Monsieur Pinipesse the tax-collector's stomach, and her back on young Monsieur Philippe's waistcoat; her right arm was round his neck, and she held a cigarette in her left.

Raphaelle appeared to be discussing matters with Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and she finished by saying: "Yes, my dear, I will."

Just then, the door opened suddenly, and Monsieur Tournevau came in. He was greeted with enthusiastic cries of: "Long live Tournevau!" and Raphaelle, who was twirling round, went and threw herself into his arms. He seized her in a vigorous embrace, and without saying a word, lifting her up as if she had been a feather, he carried her through the room.

Rosa was chatting to the ex-mayor, kissing him every moment, and pulling both his whiskers at the same time in order to keep his head straight.

Fernande and Madame remained with the four men, and Monsieur Philippe exclaimed: "I will pay for some champagne; get three bottles, Madame Tellier." And Fernande gave him a hug, and whispered to him: "Play us a waltz, will you?" So he rose and sat down at the old piano in the corner, and managed to get a hoarse waltz out of the entrails of the instrument.

The tall girl put her arms round the tax-collector, Madame asked Monsieur Vassi to take her in his arms, and the two couples turned round, kissing as they danced. Monsieur Vassi, who had formerly danced in good society, waltzed with such elegance that Madame was quite captivated.

Frederic brought the champagne; the first cork popped, and Monsieur Philippe played the introduction to a quadrille, through which the four dancers walked in society fashion, decorously, with propriety of deportment, with bows, and curtsies, and then they began to drink.

Monsieur Philippe next struck up a lively polka, and Monsieur Tournevau started off with the handsome Jewess, whom he held up in the air, without letting her feet touch the ground. Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Vassi had started off with renewed vigor and from time to time one or other couple would stop to toss off a long glass of sparkling wine. The dance was threatening to become never-ending, when Rosa opened the door.

"I want to dance," she exclaimed. And she caught hold of Monsieur Dupuis, who was sitting idle on the couch, and the dance began again.

But the bottles were empty. "I will pay for one," Monsieur Tournevau said.

"So will I," Monsieur Vassi declared.

"And I will do the same," Monsieur Dupuis remarked.

They all began to clap their hands, and it soon became a regular ball. From time to time, Louise and Flora ran upstairs quickly, had a few turns while their customers downstairs grew impatient, and then they returned regretfully to the *café*. At midnight they were still dancing.

Madame shut her eyes to what was going on, and she had long private talks in corners with Monsieur Vassi, as if to settle the last details of something that had already been agreed upon.

At last, at one o'clock, the two married men, Monsieur Tournevau and Monsieur Pinipesse, declared that they were going home, and wanted to pay. Nothing was charged for except the champagne, and that only cost six francs a bottle, instead of ten, which was the usual price, and when they expressed their surprise at such generosity, Madame, who was beaming, said to them:

"We don't have a holiday every day."

A COCK CROWED

MADAME BERTHA D'AVANCELLES had up till that time resisted all the prayers of her despairing adorer, Baron Joseph de Croissard. He had pursued her ardently in Paris during the winter, and now he was giving fêtes and shooting parties in her honor at his château at Carville, in Normandy.

Monsieur d'Avancelles, her husband, saw nothing and knew nothing, as usual. It was said that he lived apart from his wife on account of a physical weakness for which Madame d'Avancelles would not pardon him. He was a short, stout, bald man, with short arms, legs, neck, nose, and very ugly, while Madame d'Avancelles, on the contrary, was a tall, dark, and determined young woman, who laughed in her husband's face with sonorous peals, while he called her openly "Mrs. Housewife." She looked at the broad shoulders, strong build, and fair mustaches of her titled admirer, Baron Joseph de Croissard, with a certain amount of tenderness.

She had not, however, granted him anything as yet. The baron was ruining himself for her, and there was a constant round of fêting, hunting parties, and new pleasures, to which he invited the neighboring nobility. All day long the hounds gave tongue in the woods, as they followed the fox or the wild boar, and every night dazzling fireworks mingled their burning plumes with the stars, while the illuminated windows of the drawing-room cast long rays of light on to the wide lawns, where shadows were moving to and fro.

It was autumn, the russet-colored season of the year, and the leaves were whirling about on the grass like flights of birds. One noticed the smell of damp earth in the air, of the naked earth, like one scents the odor of the bare skin, when a woman's dress falls off her, after a ball.

One evening, in the previous spring, during an entertainment, Madame d'Avancelles had said to Monsieur de Croissard, who was worrying her by his importunities: "If I do succumb to you, my friend, it will not be before the fall of the leaf. I have too many things to do this summer to have any time for it." He had not forgotten that bold and amusing speech, and every day he became more pressing, every day he pushed his approaches nearer,—to use a military phrase,—and gained a hold on the heart of the fair, audacious woman, who seemed only to be resisting for form's sake.

It was the day before a large wild-boar hunt, and in the evening Madame Bertha said to the baron with a laugh: "Baron, if you kill the brute, I shall have something to say to you." And so at dawn

he was up and out, to try and discover where the solitary animal had its lair. He accompanied his huntsmen, settled the places for the relays, and organized everything personally to insure his triumph. When the horns gave the signal for setting out, he appeared in a closely fitting coat of scarlet and gold, with his waist drawn in tight, his chest expanded, his eyes radiant, and as fresh and strong as if he had just got out of bed. They set off; the wild boar bolted through the underwood as soon as he was dislodged, followed by the hounds in full cry, while the horses set off at a gallop through the narrow side-cuts in the forest. The carriages which followed the chase at a distance drove noiselessly along the soft roads.

From mischief, Madame d'Avancelles kept the baron by her side, lagging behind at a walk in an interminably long and straight drive, over which four rows of oaks hung, so as to form almost an arch, while he, trembling with love and anxiety, listened with one ear to the young woman's bantering chatter, and with the other to the blast of the horns and to the cry of the hounds as they receded in the distance.

"So you do not love me any longer?" she observed.

"How can you say such things?" he replied.

And she continued: "But you seem to be paying more attention to the sport than to me."

He groaned, and said: "Did you not order me to kill the animal myself?"

And she replied gravely: "Of course I reckon upon it. You must kill it under my eyes."

Then he trembled in his saddle, spurred his horse until it reared and, losing all patience, exclaimed: "But, by Jove, Madame, that is impossible if we remain here."

Then she spoke tenderly to him, laying her hand on his arm, or stroking his horse's mane, as if from abstraction, and said with a laugh: "But you must do it—or else, so much the worse for you."

Just then they turned to the right, into a narrow path which was overhung by trees, and suddenly, to avoid a branch which barred their way, she leaned toward him so closely, that he felt her hair tickling his neck. Suddenly he threw his arms brutally round her, and putting his heavily mustached mouth to her forehead, he gave her a furious kiss.

At first she did not move, and remained motionless under that mad caress; then she turned her head with a jerk, and either by accident or design her little lips met his, under their wealth of light hair, and a moment afterward, either from confusion or remorse, she struck her horse with her riding-whip, and went off at full gallop, and they rode on like that for some time, without exchanging a look.

The noise of the hunt came nearer, the thickets seemed to tremble, and suddenly the wild boar broke through the bushes, covered with blood, and trying to shake off the hounds who had fastened on to him, and the baron, uttering a shout of triumph exclaimed: "Let him who loves me follow me!" And he disappeared in the copse, as if the wood had swallowed him up.

When she reached an open glade a few minutes later, he was just getting up, covered with mud, his

coat torn, and his hands bloody, while the brute was lying stretched out at full length, with the baron's hunting-knife driven into its shoulder up to the hilt.

The quarry was cut at night by torchlight. It was a warm and dull evening, and the wan moon threw a yellow light on to the torches which made the night misty with their resinous smoke. The hounds devoured the wild boar's entrails, and snarled and fought for them, while the prickers and the gentlemen, standing in a circle round the spoil, blew their horns as loud as they could. The flourish of the hunting-horns resounded beyond the woods on that still night and was repeated by the echoes of the distant valleys, awaking the timid stags, rousing the yelping foxes and disturbing the little rabbits in their gambols at the edge of the rides.

The frightened nightbirds flew over the eager pack of hounds, while the women, who were moved by all these strangely picturesque things, leaned rather heavily on the men's arms, and turned aside into the forest rides, before the hounds had finished their meal. Madame d'Avancelles, feeling languid after that day of fatigue and tenderness, said to the baron: "Will you take a turn in the park, my friend?" And without replying, but trembling and nervous, he went with her, and immediately they kissed each other. They walked slowly under the almost leafless trees through which the moonbeams filtered, and their love, their desires, their longing for a closer embrace became so vehement, that they nearly yielded to it at the foot of a tree.

The horns were not sounding any longer, and the tired hounds were sleeping in the kennels. "Let us

return," the young woman said, and they went back.

When they got to the château and before they went in, she said in a weak voice: "I am so tired that I shall go to bed, my friend." And as he opened his arms for a last kiss, she ran away, saying as a last good-bye: "No—I am going to sleep. Let him who loves me follow me!"

An hour later, when the whole silent château seemed dead, the baron crept stealthily out of his room, and went and scratched at her door. As she did not reply, he tried to open it, and found that it was not locked.

She was in a reverie, resting her arms against the window ledge. He threw himself at her knees, which he kissed madly, through her dress. She said nothing, but buried her delicate fingers caressingly in his hair, and suddenly, as if she had formed some great resolution, whispered with her daring look: "I shall come back, wait for me." And stretching out her hand, she pointed with her finger to an indistinct white spot at the end of the room; it was her bed.

Then, with trembling hands and scarcely knowing what he was doing, he quickly undressed, got into the cool sheets, and stretching himself out comfortably, almost forgot his love in the pleasure he found, tired out as he was, in the contact of the linen. She did not return, however, no doubt finding amusement in making him languish. He closed his eyes with a feeling of exquisite comfort, and reflected peaceably while waiting for what he so ardently longed for. But by degrees his limbs grew languid and his thoughts became indistinct and fleeting, until his fatigue gained the upper hand and he fell asleep.

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He slept that unconquerable, heavy sleep of the worn-out hunter, slept through until daylight. Then, as the window had remained half open, the crowing of a cock suddenly woke him. The baron opened his eyes, and feeling a woman's body against his—finding himself, much to his surprise, in a strange bed, and remembering nothing for the moment—he stammered:

"What? Where am I? What is the matter?"

Then she, who had not been asleep at all, looking at this unkempt man, with red eyes and swollen lips, replied in the haughty tone of voice in which she occasionally spoke to her husband:

"It is nothing; it is only a cock crowing. Go to sleep again, Monsieur, it has nothing to do with you."

LILIE LALA

"WHEN I saw her for the first time," Louis d'Arandel said, with the look of a man who was dreaming and trying to recollect something, "I thought of some slow and yet passionate music that I once heard, though I do not remember who was the composer. It told of a fair-haired woman, whose hair was so silky, so golden, and so vibrating, that her lover had it cut off after her death, and had the strings of the magic bow of a violin made out of it, which afterward emitted such superhuman complaints and love melodies, that they made its hearers love until death.

"In her eyes there lay the mystery of deep waters; one was lost in them, drowned in them like in fathomless depths, and at the corners of her mouth there lurked the despotic and merciless smile of those women who do not fear that they may be conquered, who rule over men like cruel queens, whose hearts

remain as virgin as those of the strictest Carmelite nuns, amid a flood of lewdness.

"I have seen her angelic head, the bands of her hair which looked like plates of gold, her tall, graceful figure, her white, slender, childish hands, in stained glass windows in churches. She suggested pictures of the Annunciation, where the Archangel Gabriel descends with ultramarine colored wings, and Mary is sitting at her spinning wheel and spinning, while uttering pious prayers, seemingly a tall sister to the white lilies that are growing beside her and the roses.

"When she went through the acacia alley, she appeared on some first night in the stage box at one of the theaters, nearly always alone, and apparently feeling life a great burden, and angry because she could not change the eternal, dull round of human enjoyment, nobody would have believed that she went in for a fast life—that in the annals of gallantry she was catalogued under the strange name of "Lilie Lala," and that no man could rub against her without being irretrievably caught, and spending his last halfpenny on her.

"But with all that, Lilie had the voice of a schoolgirl, of some little innocent creature who still uses a skipping rope and wears short dresses, and had that clear, innocent laugh which reminds people of wedding bells. Sometimes, for fun, I would kneel down before her, like before the statue of a saint, and clasping my hands as if in prayer, I used to say: '*Sancta Lilie, ora pro nobis!*'

"One evening, at Biarritz, when the sky had the dull glare of intense heat and the sea was of a sinis-

ter, inky black, and was swelling and rolling in enormous phosphorescent waves on to the beach at Port-Vieux, Lilie, who was listless and strange, and was making holes in the sand with the heels of her boots, suddenly exclaimed in one of those confidences which women sometimes bestow, and for which they are sorry as soon as the story is told:

"'Ah! My dear fellow, I do not deserve to be canonized, and my life is rather a subject for a drama than a chapter from the Gospels or the "Golden Legend." As long as I can remember anything, I can remember being wrapped in lace, being carried by a woman, and continually being fussed over, as are children who have been long waited for, and who are consequently spoiled more than usual.

"'Those kisses were so nice, that I still seem to feel their sweetness, and I shrine the remembrance of them in a little place in my heart, as one preserves some lucky talisman in a reliquary. I still seem to remember an indistinct landscape lost in the mist, outlines of trees which frightened me as they creaked and groaned in the wind, and ponds on which swans were sailing. And when I look in the glass for a long time, merely for the sake of seeing myself, it seems to me as if I recognize the woman who formerly used to kiss me most frequently, and speak to me in a more loving voice than anyone else did. But what happened afterward?

"'Was I carried off, or sold to some strolling circus owner by a dishonest servant? I do not know, I have never been able to find out; but I remember that my whole childhood was spent in a circus which traveled from fair to fair, and from place to

place, with files of vans, processions of animals, and noisy music.

"'I was as tiny as an insect, and they taught me difficult tricks, to dance on the tight-rope and to perform on the slack-rope. I was beaten as if I had been a bit of plaster, and more frequently I had a piece of dry bread to gnaw than a slice of meat. But I remember that one day I slipped under one of the vans, and stole a basin of soup as my share, which one of the clowns was carefully making for his three learned dogs.

"'I had neither friends nor relations; I was employed on the dirtiest jobs, like the lowest stable-help, and I was tattooed with bruises and scars. Of the whole company, however, the one who beat me the most, who was the least sparing of his thumps, and who continually made me suffer, as if it gave him pleasure, was the manager and proprietor, a kind of old, vicious brute, whom everybody feared like the plague, a miser who was continually complaining of the receipts, who hid away the crown pieces in his mattress, invested his money in the funds, and cut down the salaries of all, as far as he could.

"'His name was Rapha Ginestous. Any other child but myself would have succumbed to such a constant martyrdom, but I grew up, and the more I grew, the prettier and more desirable I became, so that when I was fifteen, men were already beginning to write love letters to me, and to throw bouquets to me in the arena. I felt also that all the men in the company were watching me, and were coveting me as their prey; that their lustful looks rested on

my pink tights, and followed the graceful outlines of my body when I was posing on the rope that stretched from one end of the circus to the other, or jumped through the paper hoops at full gallop.

"'They were no longer the same, and spoke to me in a totally different tone of voice. They tried to come into my dressing-room when I was changing my dress, and Rapha Ginestous seemed to have lost his head, and his heart throbbed audibly when he came near me. Yes, he had the audacity to propose bargains to me which covered my cheeks and forehead with blushes, and which filled me with disgust; and as I felt a fierce hatred for him, and detested him with all my soul and all my strength—as I wished to make him suffer the tortures which he had inflicted on me, a hundredfold, I used him as the target at which I was constantly aiming.

"'Instinctively, I employed every cunning perfidy, every artful coquetry, every lie, every artifice that can upset the strongest and most sceptical, and place them at our mercy, like submissive animals. He loved me, he really loved me, that lascivious goat, who had never seen anything in a woman except a soft couch, and an instrument of convenience and of forgetfulness. He loved me like old men do love, with frenzy, with degrading transports, and with the prostration of his will and of his strength. I held him as in a leash, and did whatever I liked with him.

"'I was much more manageress than he was manager, and the poor wretch wasted away in vain hopes and in useless transports; he had not even touched the tips of my fingers, and was reduced to bestowing his caresses on my columbine shoes, my

tights, and my wigs. And I cared not *that* for it, you understand! Not the slightest familiarity did I allow, and he began to grow thin and ill, and became idiotic. And while he implored me, and promised to marry me, with his eyes full of tears, I shouted with laughter; I reminded him of how he had beaten, abused, and humiliated me, and had often made me wish for death. And as soon as he left me, he would swill bottles of gin and whiskey, and constantly got so abominably drunk that he rolled under the table, and all to drown his sorrow and forget his desire.

"'He covered me with jewels, and tried everything he could to tempt me to become his wife. In spite of my inexperience in life, he consulted me with regard to everything he undertook, and one evening, after I had stroked his face with my hand, I persuaded him without any difficulty, to make his will, by which he left me all his savings, and the circus and everything belonging to it.

"'It was in the middle of winter, near Mostow; it snowed continually, and one almost burnt oneself at the stoves in trying to keep warm. Rapha Ginestous had had supper brought into the largest van, which was his, after the performance, and for hours we ate and drank. I was very nice toward him, and filled his glass every moment; I even sat on his knee and kissed him. And all his love, and the fumes of the alcohol of the wine, mounted to his head, and gradually made him so helplessly intoxicated, that he fell from his chair inert, as if he had been struck by lightning, without opening his eyes or saying a word.

"'The rest of the troupe were asleep, the lights

were out in all the little windows, and not a sound was to be heard, while the snow continued to fall in large flakes. So having put out the petroleum lamp, I opened the door, and taking the drunkard by the feet, as if he had been a bale of goods, I threw him out into that white shroud.

"'The next morning the stiff and convulsed body of Rapha Ginestous was picked up, and as everybody knew his inveterate drinking habits, no one thought of instituting an inquiry, or of accusing me of a crime. Thus was I avenged, and gained a yearly income of nearly fifteen thousand francs.* What, after all, is the good of being honest, and of pardoning our enemies, as the Gospel bids us?"

"And now," Louis d'Arandel said in conclusion, "suppose we go and have a cocktail or two at the Casino, for I do not think that I have ever talked so much in my life before."

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* About $3000.

THE STORY OF A FARM-GIRL

As the weather was very fine, the people on the farm had dined more quickly than usual, and had returned to the fields.

The female servant, Rose, remained alone in the large kitchen, where the fire on the hearth was dying out, under the large boiler of hot water. From time to time she took some water out of it, and slowly washed her plates and dishes, stopping occasionally to look at the two streaks of light which the sun threw on to the long table through the window, and which showed the defects in the glass.

Three venturesome hens were picking up the crumbs under the chairs, while the smell of the poultry yard and the warmth from the cow-stall came in through the half open door, and a cock was heard crowing in the distance.

When she had finished her work, wiped down the table, dusted the mantelpiece, and put the plates on

to the high dresser, close to the wooden clock, with its enormous pendulum, she drew a long breath, as she felt rather oppressed, without exactly knowing why. She looked at the black clay walls, the rafters that were blackened with smoke, from which spiders' webs were hanging amid pickled herrings and strings of onions, and then she sat down, rather overcome by the stale emanations from the floor, on which so many things had been spilled. With these was mingled the smell of the pans of milk, which were set out to raise the cream in the adjoining dairy.

She wanted to sew, as usual, but she did not feel strong enough for it, and so she went to get a mouthful of fresh air at the door, which seemed to do her good.

The fowls were lying on the smoking dung-hill; some of them were scratching with one claw in search of worms, while the cock stood up proudly among them. Now and then he selected one of them, and walked round her with a slight cluck of amorous invitation. The hen got up in a careless way as she received his attentions, supported herself on her legs and spread out her wings; then she shook her feathers to shake out the dust, and stretched herself out on the dung-hill again, while he crowed, in sign of triumph, and the cocks in all the neighboring farmyards replied to him, as if they were uttering amorous challenges from farm to farm.

The girl looked at them without thinking; then she raised her eyes and was almost dazzled at the sight of the apple-trees in blossom, which looked almost like powdered heads. Just then, a colt, full of

life and friskiness, galloped past her. Twice he jumped over the ditches, and then stopped suddenly, as if surprised at being alone.

She also felt inclined to run; she felt inclined to move and to stretch her limbs, and to repose in the warm, breathless air. She took a few undecided steps, and closed her eyes, for she was seized with a feeling of animal comfort; then she went to look for the eggs in the hen loft. There were thirteen of them, which she took in and put into the storeroom; but the smell from the kitchen disgusted her again, and she went out to sit on the grass for a time.

The farmyard, which was surrounded by trees, seemed to be asleep. The tall grass, among which the tall yellow dandelions rose up like streaks of yellow light, was of a vivid green, the fresh spring green. The apple-trees threw their shade all round them, and the thatched houses, on which the blue and yellow iris flowers, with their sword-like leaves, grew, smoked as if the moisture of the stables and barns was coming through the straw.

The girl went to the shed where the carts and traps were kept. Close to it, in a ditch, there was a large patch of violets whose scent was perceptible all round, while beyond it could be seen the open country where the corn was growing, with clumps of trees in the distance, and groups of laborers here and there, who looked as small as dolls, and white horses like toys, who were pulling a child's cart, driven by a man as tall as one's finger.

She took up a bundle of straw, threw it into the ditch and sat down upon it; then, not feeling comfortable, she undid it, spread it out and lay down

upon it at full length, on her back, with both arms under her head, and her limbs stretched out.

Gradually her eyes closed, and she was falling into a state of delightful languor. She was, in fact, almost asleep, when she felt two hands on her bosom, and then she sprang up at a bound. It was Jacques, one of the farm laborers, a tall fellow from Picardy, who had been making love to her for a long time. He had been looking after the sheep, and seeing her lying down in the shade, he had come stealthily, and holding his breath, with glistening eyes, and bits of straw in his hair.

He tried to kiss her, but she gave him a smack in the face, for she was as strong as he, and he was shrewd enough to beg her pardon: so they sat down side by side and talked amicably. They spoke about the favorable weather, of their master, who was a good fellow, then of their neighbors, of all the people in the country round, of themselves, of their village, of their youthful days, of their recollections, of their relatives, whom they had not seen for a long time, and might not see again. She grew sad, as she thought of it, while he, with one fixed idea in his head, rubbed against her with a kind of a shiver, overcome by desire.

"I have not seen my mother for a long time," she said. "It is very hard to be separated like that." And she directed her looks into the distance, toward the village in the North, which she had left.

Suddenly, however, he seized her by the neck and kissed her again! but she struck him so violently in the face with her clenched fist, that his nose began to bleed, and he got up and laid his head against the

stem of a tree. When she saw that, she was sorry, and going up to him, she said:

"Have I hurt you?"

He, however, only laughed. "No, it was a mere nothing;" though she had hit him right on the middle of the nose. "What a devil!" he said, and he looked at her with admiration, for she had inspired him with a feeling of respect and of a very different kind of admiration, which was the beginning of real love for that tall, strong wench.

When the bleeding had stopped, he proposed a walk, as he was afraid of his neighbor's heavy hand, if they remained side by side like that much longer; but she took his arm of her own accord, in the avenue, as if they had been out for an evening walk, and said: "It is not nice of you to despise me like that, Jacques."

He protested, however. No, he did not despise her. He was in love with her, that was all.

"So you really want to marry me?" she asked.

He hesitated, and then looked at her aside, while she looked straight ahead of her. She had fat, red cheeks, a full, protuberant bust under her muslin dress, thick, red lips, and her neck, which was almost bare, was covered with small beads of perspiration. He felt a fresh access of desire, and putting his lips to her ear, he murmured: "Yes, of course I do."

Then she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed for such a long time, that they both of them lost their breath. From that moment the eternal story of love began between them. They plagued one another in corners; they met in the moonlight under a haystack, and gave each other bruises on the

legs, with their heavy nailed boots. By degrees, however, Jacques seemed to grow tired of her: he avoided her; scarcely spoke to her, and did not try any longer to meet her alone, which made her sad and anxious, especially when she found that she was pregnant.

At first, she was in a state of consternation; then she got angry, and her rage increased every day, because she could not meet him, as he avoided her most carefully. At last, one night when everyone in the farmhouse was asleep, she went out noiselessly in her petticoat, with bare feet, crossed the yard and opened the door of the stable where Jacques was lying in a large box of straw, over his horses. He pretended to snore when he heard her coming, but she knelt down by his side and shook him until he sat up.

"What do you want?" he then asked of her. And she with clenched teeth, and trembling with anger, replied:

"I want—I want you to marry me, as you promised."

But he only laughed, and replied: "Oh! If a man were to marry all the girls with whom he has made a slip, he would have more than enough to do."

Then she seized him by the throat, threw him on to his back, so that he could not disengage himself from her, and half strangling him, she shouted into his face: "I am *enceinte*, do you hear? I am *enceinte!*"

He gasped for breath, as he was nearly choked, and so they remained, both of them, motionless and without speaking, in the dark silence, which was only broken by the noise that a horse made as he

pulled the hay out of the manger, and then slowly chewed it.

When Jacques found that she was the stronger, he stammered out: "Very well, I will marry you, as that is the case."

But she did not believe his promises. "It must be at once," she said. "You must have the banns put up."

"At once," he replied.

"Swear solemnly that you will."

He hesitated for a few moments, and then said: "I swear it, by heaven."

Then she released her grasp, and went away without another word.

She had no chance of speaking to him for several days, and as the stable was now always locked at night, she was afraid to make any noise, for fear of creating a scandal. One day however, she saw another man come in at dinner-time, and so she said: "Has Jacques left?"

"Yes," the man replied; "I have got his place."

This made her tremble so violently, that she could not take the saucepan off the fire; and later when they were all at work, she went up into her room and cried, burying her head in her bolster, so that she might not be heard. During the day, however, she tried to obtain some information without exciting any suspicions, but she was so overwhelmed by the thoughts of her misfortune, that she fancied that all the people whom she asked, laughed maliciously. All she learned, however, was, that he had left the neighborhood altogether.

II.

Then a cloud of constant misery began for her. She worked mechanically, without thinking of what she was doing, with one fixed idea in her head: "Suppose people were to know."

This continual feeling made her so incapable of reasoning, that she did not even try to think of any means of avoiding the disgrace that she knew must ensue, which was irreparable, and drawing nearer every day, and which was as sure as death itself. She got up every morning long before the others, and persistently tried to look at her figure in a piece of broken looking-glass at which she did her hair, as she was very anxious to know whether anybody would notice a change in her, and during the day she stopped working every few minutes to look at herself from top to toe, to see whether the size of her abdomen did not make her apron look too short.

The months went on. She scarcely spoke now, and when she was asked a question, she did not appear to understand. She had a frightened look, with haggard eyes and trembling hands, which made her master say to her occasionally: "My poor girl, how stupid you have grown lately."

In church, she hid behind a pillar, and no longer ventured to go to confession. She feared to face the priest, to whom she attributed a superhuman power, which enabled him to read people's consciences; and at meal times, the looks of her fellow-servants almost made her faint with mental agony.

She was always fancying that she had been found out by the cowherd, a precocious and cunning little lad, whose bright eyes seemed always to be watching her.

One morning the postman brought her a letter, and as she had never received one in her life before, she was so upset by it, that she was obliged to sit down. Perhaps it was from him? But as she could not read, she sat anxious and trembling with that piece of paper covered with ink in her hand; after a time, however, she put it into her pocket, as she did not venture to confide her secret to anyone. She often stopped in her work to look at the lines, written at regular intervals, and terminating in a signature, imagining vaguely that she would suddenly discover their meaning. At last, as she felt half mad with impatience and anxiety, she went to the schoolmaster, who told her to sit down, and read the letter to her, as follows:

"My Dear Daughter:—I write to tell you that I am very ill. Our neighbor, Monsieur Dentu, begs you to come, if you can,

"For your affectionate mother.

"Césaire Dentu,

"*Deputy Mayor.*"

She did not say a word, and went away, but as soon as she was alone, her legs gave way, and she fell down by the roadside, and remained there till night.

When she got back, she told the farmer her trouble. He allowed her to go home for as long as she wanted, promised to have her work done by a charwoman, and to take her back when she returned.

Her mother died soon after she got there, and the next day Rose gave birth to a seven months' child, a miserable little skeleton, thin enough to make anybody shudder. It seemed to be suffering continually, to judge from the painful manner in which it moved its poor little limbs, which were as thin as a crab's legs, but it lived, for all that. She said that she was married, but that she could not saddle herself with the child, so she left it with some neighbors, who promised to take great care of it, and she went back to the farm.

But then, in her heart, which had been wounded so long, there arose something like brightness, an unknown love for that frail little creature which she had left behind her, but there was fresh suffering in that very love, suffering which she felt every hour and every minute, because she was parted from the child. What pained her most, however, was a mad longing to kiss it, to press it in her arms, to feel the warmth of its little body against her skin. She could not sleep at night; she thought of it the whole day long, and in the evening, when her work was done, she used to sit in front of the fire and look at it intently, like people do whose thoughts are far away.

They began to talk about her, and to tease her about her lover. They asked her whether he was tall, handsome, and rich. When was the wedding to be, and the christening? And often she ran away to cry by herself, for these questions seemed to hurt her, like the prick of a pin, and in order to forget their jokes, she began to work still more energetically, and still thinking of her child, she sought for the means of saving up money for it, and determined to work

so that her master would be obliged to raise her wages.

Then, by degrees, she almost monopolized the work, and persuaded him to get rid of one servant girl, who had become useless since she had taken to working like two; she economized in the bread, oil, and candles, in the corn which they gave to the fowls too extravagantly, and in the fodder for the horses and cattle, which was rather wasted. She was as miserly about her master's money as if it had been her own, and by dint of making good bargains, of getting high prices for all their produce, and by baffling the peasants' tricks when they offered anything for sale, he at last intrusted her with buying and selling everything, with the direction of all the laborers, and with the quantity of provisions necessary for the household, so that in a short time she became indispensable to him. She kept such a strict eye on everything about her, that under her direction the farm prospered wonderfully, and for five miles round people talked of "Master Vallin's servant," and the farmer himself said everywhere: "That girl is worth more than her weight in gold."

But time passed by, and her wages remained the same. Her hard work was accepted as something that was due from every good servant, and as a mere token of her good-will; and she began to think rather bitterly, that if the farmer could put fifty or a hundred crowns extra into the bank every month, thanks to her, she was still only earning her two hundred francs a year, neither more nor less, and so she made up her mind to ask for an increase of wages. She went to see the schoolmaster three times about

it, but when she got there, she spoke about something else. She felt a kind of modesty in asking for money, as if it were something disgraceful; but at last, one day, when the farmer was having breakfast by himself in the kitchen, she said to him, with some embarrassment, that she wished to speak to him particularly. He raised his head in surprise, with both his hands on the table, holding his knife, with its point in the air, in one, and a piece of bread in the other. He looked fixedly at the girl, who felt uncomfortable under his gaze, but asked for a week's holiday, so that she might get away, as she was not very well. He acceded to her request immediately, and then added, in some embarrassment, himself:

"When you come back, I shall have something to say to you, myself."

III.

The child was nearly eight months old, and she did not know it again. It had grown rosy and chubby all over like a little bundle of living fat. She threw herself on to it as if it had been some prey, and kissed it so violently that it began to scream with terror, and then she began to cry herself, because it did not know her, and stretched out its arms to its nurse, as soon as it saw her. But the next day, it began to get used to her, and laughed when it saw her, and she took it into the fields and ran about excitedly with it, and sat down

under the shade of the trees, and then, for the first time in her life, she opened her heart to somebody, and told the infant her troubles, how hard her work was, her anxieties and her hopes, and she quite tired the child with the violence of her caresses.

She took the greatest pleasure in handling it, in washing and dressing it, for it seemed to her that all this was the confirmation of her maternity, and she would look at it, almost feeling surprised that it was hers, and she used to say to herself in a low voice, as she danced it in her arms: "It is my baby, it is my baby."

She cried all the way home as she returned to the farm, and had scarcely got in, before her master called her into his room. She went in, feeling astonished and nervous, without knowing why.

"Sit down there," he said.

She sat down, and for some moments they remained side by side, in some embarrassment, with their arms hanging at their sides, as if they did not know what to do with them, and looking each other in the face, after the manner of peasants.

The farmer, a stout, jovial, obstinate man of forty-five, who had lost two wives, evidently felt embarrassed, which was very unusual with him. But at last he made up his mind, and began to speak vaguely, hesitating a little, and looking out of the window as he talked.

"How is it, Rose," he said, "that you have never thought of settling in life?"

She grew as pale as death, and seeing that she gave him no answer, he went on:

"You are a good, steady, active, and economical

girl, and a wife like you would make a man's fortune."

She did not move, but looked frightened; she did not even try to comprehend his meaning, for her thoughts were in a whirl, as if at the approach of some great danger; so after waiting for a few seconds, he went on:

"You see, a farm without a mistress can never succeed, even with a servant like you are."

Then he stopped, for he did not know what else to say, and Rose looked at him with the air of a person who thinks that he is face to face with a murderer, and ready to flee at the slightest movement he may make; but after waiting for about five minutes, he asked her:

"Well, will it suit you?"

"Will what suit me, master?"

And he said, quickly: "Why, to marry me, by Jove!"

She jumped up, but fell back on to her chair as if she had been struck, and there she remained motionless, like a person who is overwhelmed by some great misfortune. But at last the farmer grew impatient, and said: "Come, what more do you want?"

She looked at him almost in terror; then suddenly the tears came into her eyes, and she said twice, in a choking voice: "I cannot, I cannot!"

"Why not?" he asked. "Come, don't be silly; I will give you until to-morrow to think it over."

And he hurried out of the room, very glad to have finished a matter which had troubled him a good deal. He had no doubt that she would the next morning accept a proposal which she could never have expected, and which would be a capital bargain

for him, as he thus bound a woman to himself who would certainly bring him more than if she had the best dowry in the district.

Neither could there be any scruples about an unequal match between them, for in the country everyone is very nearly equal. The farmer works just like his laborers do; the latter frequently become masters in their turn, and the female servants constantly become the mistresses of the establishment, without making any change in their life or habits.

Rose did not go to bed that night. She threw herself, dressed as she was, on to her bed, and she had not even strength to cry left in her, she was so thoroughly astonished. She remained quite inert, scarcely knowing that she had a body, and without being at all able to collect her thoughts, though at moments she remembered a part of that which had happened, and then she was frightened at the idea of what might happen. Her terror increased, and every time the great kitchen clock struck the hour, she broke into a perspiration from grief. She lost her head, and had a nightmare; her candle went out, and then she began to imagine that some one had thrown a spell over her, as country people so often fancy, and she felt a mad inclination to run away, to escape and flee before her misfortune, as a ship scuds before the wind.

An owl hooted, and she shivered, sat up, put her hands to her face, into her hair, and all over her body, and then she went downstairs, as if she were walking in her sleep. When she got into the yard, she stooped down, so as not to be seen by any prowling scamp, for the moon, which was setting, shed a

bright light over the fields. Instead of opening the gate, she scrambled over the fence, and as soon as she was outside, she started off. She went on straight before her, with a quick, elastic trot, and from time to time, she unconsciously uttered a piercing cry. Her long shadow accompanied her, and now and then some night-bird flew over her head, while the dogs in the farmyards barked, as they heard her pass. One even jumped over the ditch, followed her, and tried to bite her, but she turned round at it, and gave such a terrible yell that the frightened animal ran back, and cowered in silence in its kennel.

The stars grew dim, and the birds began to twitter; day was breaking. The girl was worn out and panting, and when the sun rose in the purple sky, she stopped, for her swollen feet refused to go any further. But she saw a pond in the distance, a large pond whose stagnant water looked like blood under the reflection of this new day, and she limped on with short steps and with her hand on her heart, in order to dip both her feet in it.

She sat down on a tuft of grass, took off her sabots which were full of dust, pulled off her stockings and plunged her legs into the still water, from which bubbles were rising here and there.

A feeling of delicious coolness pervaded her from head to foot, and suddenly, while she was looking fixedly at the deep pool, she was seized with giddiness, and with a mad longing to throw herself into it. All her sufferings would be over in there; over forever. She no longer thought of her child; she only wanted peace, complete rest, and to sleep forever, and she got up with raised arms and took two

steps forward. She was in the water up to her thighs, and she was just about to throw herself in, when sharp, pricking pains in her ankles made her jump back. She uttered a cry of despair, for, from her knees to the tips of her feet, long, black leeches were sucking in her life blood, and were swelling, as they adhered to her flesh. She did not dare to touch them, and screamed with horror, so that her cries of despair attracted a peasant, who was driving along at some distance, to the spot. He pulled off the leeches one by one, applied herbs to the wounds, and drove the girl to her master's farm, in his gig.

She was in bed for a fortnight, and as she was sitting outside the door on the first morning that she got up, the farmer suddenly came and planted himself before her.

"Well," he said, "I suppose the affair is settled, isn't it?"

She did not reply at first, and then, as he remained standing and looking at her intently with his piercing eyes, she said with difficulty: "No, master, I cannot."

But he immediately flew into a rage. "You cannot, girl; you cannot? I should just like to know the reason why?"

She began to cry, and repeated: "I cannot."

He looked at her, and then exclaimed, angrily: "Then I suppose you have a lover?"

"Perhaps that is it," she replied, trembling with shame.

The man got as red as a poppy, and stammered out in a rage: "Ah! So you confess it, you slut! And pray who is the fellow? Some penniless, half-

starved ragamuffin, without a roof to his head, I suppose? Who is it, I say?"

And as she gave him no answer, he continued: "Ah! So you will not tell me. Then I will tell you; it is Jean Bauda!"

"No, not he," she exclaimed.

"Then it is Pierre Martin?"

"Oh! no, master."

And he angrily mentioned all the young fellows in the neighborhood, while she denied that he had hit upon the right one, and every moment wiped her eyes with the corner of her blue apron. But he still tried to find it out, with his brutish obstinacy, and, as it were, scratched her heart to discover her secret, as a terrier scratches at a hole to try and get at the animal which he scents in it. Suddenly, however, the man shouted: "By George! It is Jacques, the man who was here last year. They used to say that you were always talking together, and that you thought about getting married."

Rose was choking, and she grew scarlet, while her tears suddenly stopped, and dried up on her cheeks, like drops of water on hot iron, and she exclaimed: "No, it is not he, it is not he!"

"Is that really a fact?" asked the cunning farmer, who partly guessed the truth, and she replied hastily:

"I will swear it; I will swear it to you." She tried to think of something by which to swear, as she did not dare to invoke sacred things.

But he interrupted her: "At any rate, he used to follow you into every corner, and devoured you with his eyes at meal times. Did you ever give him your promise, eh?"

This time she looked her master straight in the face. "No, never, never; I will solemnly swear to you, that if he were to come to-day and ask me to marry him, I would have nothing to do with him."

She spoke with such an air of sincerity, that the farmer hesitated, and then he continued, as if speaking to himself: "What, then? You have not had *a misfortune,* as they call it, or it would have been known, and as it has no consequences, no girl would refuse her master on that account. There must be something at the bottom of it, however."

She could say nothing; she had not the strength to speak, and he asked her again: "You will not?"

"I cannot, master," she said, with a sigh, and he turned on his heel.

She thought she had got rid of him altogether, and spent the rest of the day almost tranquilly, but as worn out as if she, instead of the old white horse, had been turning the threshing machine all day. She went to bed as soon as she could, and fell asleep immediately. In the middle of the night, however, two hands touching the bed woke her. She trembled with fear, but she immediately recognized the farmer's voice, when he said to her: "Don't be frightened, Rose; I have come to speak to you."

She was surprised at first, but when he tried to take liberties with her, she understood what he wanted, and began to tremble violently. She felt quite alone in the darkness, still heavy from sleep, and quite unprotected, by the side of the man who stood near her. She certainly did not consent, but resisted carelessly, herself struggling against that instinct which is always strong in simple natures,

and very imperfectly protected, by the undecided will of an exhausted body. She turned her head now to the wall, and now toward the room, in order to avoid the attentions which the farmer tried to press on her, and her body writhed under the coverlet, weakened as she was by the fatigue of the struggle, while he became brutal, intoxicated by desire.

They lived together as man and wife, and one morning he said to her: "I have put up our banns, and we will get married next month."

She did not reply, for what could she say? She did not resist, for what could she do?

IV.

She married him. She felt as if she were in a pit with inaccessible edges, from which she could never get out, and all kinds of misfortunes remained hanging over her head, like huge rocks, which would fall on the first occasion. Her husband gave her the impression of a man whom she had stolen, and who would find it out some day or other. And then she thought of her child, who was the cause of her misfortunes, but was also the cause of all her happiness on earth. She went to see him twice a year, and she came back more unhappy each time.

But she gradually grew accustomed to her life, her fears were allayed, her heart was at rest, and she lived with an easier mind, though still with some

vague fear floating in her mind. So years went on, and the child was six. She was almost happy now, when suddenly the farmer's temper grew very bad.

For two or three years, he seemed to have been nursing some secret anxiety, to be troubled by some care, some mental disturbance, which was gradually increasing. He remained at table a long time after dinner, with his head in his hands, sad and devoured by sorrow. He always spoke hastily, sometimes even brutally, and it even seemed as if he bore a grudge against his wife, for at times he answered her roughly, almost angrily.

One day, when a neighbor's boy came for some eggs, and she spoke rather crossly to him, for she was very busy, her husband suddenly came in, and said to her in his unpleasant voice: "If that were your own child, you would not treat him so."

She was hurt and did not reply, and then she went back into the house with all her grief awakened afresh. At dinner, the farmer neither spoke to her nor looked at her, and seemed to hate her, to despise her, to know something about the affair at last. In consequence, she lost her head and did not venture to remain alone with him after the meal was over, but left the room and hastened to the church.

It was getting dusk; the narrow nave was in total darkness, but she heard footsteps in the choir, for the sacristan was preparing the tabernacle lamp for the night. That spot of trembling light, which was lost in the darkness of the arches, looked to Rose like her last hope, and with her eyes fixed on it, she fell on her knees. The chain rattled as the little lamp swung up into the air, and almost immediately the small bell

rang out the "Angelus" through the increasing mist. She went up to him, as he was going out.

"Is Monsieur le Curé at home?" she asked.

"Of course he is; this is his dinner-time."

She trembled as she rang the bell of the parsonage. The priest was just sitting down to dinner, and he made her sit down also. "Yes, yes, I know all about it; your husband has mentioned the matter to me that brings you here."

The poor woman nearly fainted, and the priest continued: "What do you want, my child?" And he hastily swallowed several spoonfuls of soup, some of which dropped on to his greasy cassock. But Rose did not venture to say anything more, but got up to go, while the priest said: "Courage."

So she went out, and returned to the farm, without knowing what she was doing. The farmer was waiting for her, as the laborers had gone away during her absence, and she fell heavily at his feet, and shedding a flood of tears, she said to him: "What have you got against me?"

He began to shout and to swear: "What have I got against you? That I have no children, by God! When a man takes a wife, he does not want to be left alone with her until the end of his days. That is what I have against you. When a cow has no calves, she is not worth anything, and when a woman has no children, she is also not worth anything."

She began to cry, and said: "It is not my fault! It is not my fault!"

He grew rather more gentle when he heard that, and added: "I do not say that it is, but it is very annoying, all the same."

V.

From that day forward, she had only one thought —to have a child, another child. She confided her wish to everybody, and in consequence of this, a neighbor told her of an infallible method. This was, to make her husband a glass of water with a pinch of ashes in it, every evening. The farmer consented to try it, but without success; so they said to each other: "Perhaps there are some secret ways?" And they tried to find out. They were told of a shepherd who lived ten leagues off, and so Vallin one day drove off to consult him. The shepherd gave him a loaf on which he had made some marks; it was kneaded up with herbs, and both of them were to eat a piece of it before and after their mutual caresses; but they ate the whole loaf without obtaining any results from it.

Next, a schoolmaster unveiled mysteries and processes of love which were unknown in the country, but infallible, so he declared; but none of them had the desired effect. Then the priest advised them to make a pilgrimage to the shrine at Fécamp. Rose went with the crowd and prostrated herself in the abbey, and mingling her prayers with the coarse wishes of the peasants around her, she prayed that she might be fruitful a second time; but it was in vain, and then she thought that she was being punished for her first fault, and she was seized by terrible

grief. She was wasting away with sorrow; her husband was growing old prematurely, and was wearing himself out in useless hopes.

Then war broke out between them; he called her names and beat her. They quarreled all day long, and when they were in bed together at night he flung insults and obscenities at her, panting with rage, until one night, not being able to think of any means of making her suffer more, he ordered her to get up and go and stand out of doors in the rain, until daylight. As she did not obey him, he seized her by the neck, and began to strike her in the face with his fists, but she said nothing, and did not move. In his exasperation he knelt on her, and with clenched teeth and mad with rage began to beat her. Then in her despair she rebelled, and flinging him against the wall with a furious gesture, she sat up, and in an altered voice, she hissed: "I have had a child, I have had one! I had it by Jacques; you know Jacques well. He promised to marry me, but he left this neighborhood without keeping his word."

The man was thunderstruck, and could hardly speak, but at last he stammered out: "What are you saying? What are you saying?"

Then she began to sob, and amid her tears she said: "That was the reason why I did not want to marry you. I could not tell you, for you would have left me without any bread for my child. You have never had any children, so you cannot understand, you cannot understand!"

He said again, mechanically, with increasing surprise: "You have a child? You have a child?"

"You won me by force, as I suppose you know. I did not want to marry you," she said, still sobbing.

Then he got up, lighted the candle, and began to walk up and down, with his arms behind him. She was cowering on the bed and crying, and suddenly he stopped in front of her, and said: "Then it is my fault that you have no children?"

She gave him no answer, and he began to walk up and down again, and then, stopping again, he continued: "How old is your child?"

"Just six," she whispered.

"Why did you not tell me about it?" he asked.

"How could I?" she replied, with a sigh.

He remained standing, motionless. "Come, get up," he said.

She got up, with some difficulty, and then when she was standing on the floor, he suddenly began to laugh, with his hearty laugh of his good days, and seeing how surprised she was, he added: "Very well, we will go and fetch the child, as you and I can have none together."

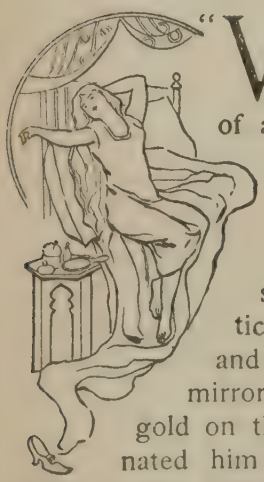
She was so scared that if she had the strength she would assuredly have run away, but the farmer rubbed his hands and said: "I wanted to adopt one, and now we have found one. I asked the Curé about an orphan, some time ago."

Then, still laughing, he kissed his weeping and agitated wife on both cheeks, and shouted out, as if she could not hear him: "Come along, mother, we will go and see whether there is any soup left; I should not mind a plateful."

She put on her petticoat, and they went down-

stairs; and while she was kneeling in front of the fireplace, and lighting the fire under the saucepan, he continued to walk up and down the kitchen with long strides, and said: "Well, I am really glad at this; I am not saying it for form's sake, but I am glad, I am really very glad."

THE BANDMASTER'S SISTER



"WHAT a joke!" said the bandmaster, twirling his mustache with the foolish smile of a good-looking man who dangles after women's petticoats in order that he may get on in the world the quicker.

His comrades' equivocal allusions puzzled him, though they tickled him like popular applause, and he stealthily looked in the large mirrors at the new lyres embroidered in gold on the collar of his tunic. They fascinated him by their glitter, and half intoxicated by the doubtful champagne that he had drunk during dinner, and by the glasses of chartreuse and of Bavarian beer imbibed afterward, and excited by the songs, he was indulging in his usual dreams of success.

He saw himself on the platform of a public garden, standing before his musicians in a flood of light, and he fancied already that he could hear the whispers of

women, and feel the caresses of their looks upon him.

He saw himself invited even into the drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, so difficult of access. With his handsome, pale face, and his wonderful manner of rendering Chopin's music, he might penetrate anywhere, and perhaps some romantic heiress would fall in love with him and consent to forget that he was only a poor musician, the son of small shopkeepers, who were still in trade at Bayeux.

Lieutenant Varache, who was stirring the punch, shrugged his shoulders, and continued in a bantering voice:

"Yes, Monsieur Parisel, they are sure to ask you whether you have just joined the regiment, or whether you have a mistress."

"What do I know?"

"But they say that you have, and that her eyes grow so bright when she speaks to you that a man would forfeit three months' pay for a glance of them, by Jove!"

Another traced her likeness in a few words, and described her as if she had been some knickknack for sale at an auction. Her hair came low on her forehead like a golden net, her skin was dazzlingly white, while her bright eyes threw out glances comparable only to those flashes of summer lightning which dart across the sky on a calm June night.

Her delicate figure, he said, recalled a plant that has grown too rapidly. She was a droll creature, on the whole, who at times looked as if nature had made a mistake in the fashioning of her — who buried herself as it were in the shade, hid herself in fact,

and did not surrender either her heart or her body, leaving only the impression of a statue on the bed in which she slept, one who appeared delighted with the ignoble business she carried on. Parisel, however, was not listening to them any longer.

He was terribly vexed at meeting with such a commonplace adventure at the very start, at coming across a girl who would make him ridiculous and soil him with unclean love. She could only lower him, and bring him down to the level of rollicking troopers, who are welcome guests in houses of bad character.

"Well," said one of his comrades suddenly, "suppose we go in and finish the night at that establishment; it will be far jollier, and the chief will not be obliged to cudgel his brains to remember the name of the girl he loves!"

* * * * * * *

The officers pushed open the door of the salon, where a servant was lighting the chandelier, and Marchessy called out in a loud voice, amid bursts of laughter:

"Here, Lucie! We have brought your sweetheart to you!"

She came in first, slowly, and wrapped in a transparent muslin dressing-gown, and stopped, as if the beating of her heart were choking her. The bandmaster did not move or say a word; he might have been a duelist, who, seeing his adversary advancing toward and taking aim at him, is waiting for death.

Great drops of perspiration rolled down his face. The blood had left it, while the woman looked at him. She did not appear to recognize him, although

her eyes wore a look of triumphant pleasure, but when he started back, and turned his head away, she said to him, in a mocking voice:

"What, my dear, are you not going to kiss me, after a whole year? I must have altered very much, very much indeed. Do not my mouth, and this mark by the side of my ear, bring something to your mind?"

And Varache, who had just lit a cigar, muttered: "Are they going to act a play until to-morrow?"

Then Lucie threw herself on to a sofa, and with her chin in her hands, and in the posture of a *fille de joie* on the lookout for the pleasure she wishes, she continued gravely:

"We lived at the end of a quiet street behind the cathedral, a street in which pots of carnations stood on the window ledges, through which the novitiate went in procession twice a day, and where I was bored to death. Our parents' shop was cold and dark; my mother thought of nothing but of going to all the services, and of attending the *novenas,* while my father bent over the counter. There was nobody to pet me, to advise me, or to teach me what life really was, and besides that, I had the instinctive feeling that they cared for nobody in this world but my brother.

"The first kiss that touched my lips nearly sent me mad, and I had not the force to resist or to say *no.* I did not even ask my seducer to marry me, to promise me what men do promise girls. We met in a booth at the fair, and I used to go to meet him every evening in a meadow bordered by poplar trees. He had a situation as clerk or collector, I believe, and

when he was sent to another town, I was already three months *enceinte.* My people soon found it out, and forced me to acknowledge everything, and they locked me up like a prisoner who wished to escape from jail.

"My brother was home for his holidays—do you remember now, Monsieur Parisel? He had just been appointed second head clerk, was reckoning on still further speedy advancement, and was bursting with pride. He was harder and more inexorable than the two old people toward me, poor forsaken girl as I was, although they had never left their home. He spoke about his future, which would be compromised, of the disgrace which would fall on all the family, went into a rage, and pitied neither my tears nor my prayers, and treated me with the cruelty of a hangman.

"And they sent me a long way off, like a servant who has committed a theft, and condemned me to be confined at a farm in a village where the peasants treated me harshly. The child died, but the mother lived through everything.

"One does not have good luck very frequently, confound it, and the only thing that I could do was to return evil, to strike at the coward whom I hated, to dishonor and to lower his name, to pursue this fellow who strutted about in his uniform, and who had won the game, from garrison to garrison, as if I had been vermin. That is why I, of my own accord, came to this house, where one belongs to everybody. That is why I have become more vicious than any of the other girls, and why I have told you this unentertaining story.

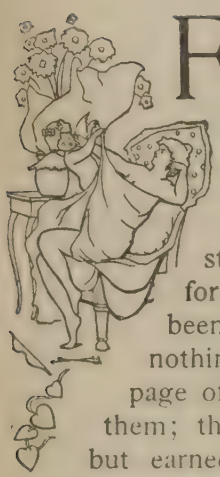
"Who will pay ten francs for the bandmaster's sister? Upon my honor, you will not regret your money!"

His comrades got Parisel out of the house. He resisted for a week, but then sold everything he had, borrowed the money to pay Lucie's debts, and tried in vain to free himself from that weight, and to get her expelled from the town, but she always returned. She was as implacable toward him as a gerfalcon that is devouring its prey. Tne adventure had got wind, and was even talked about at the soldiers' mess, and as the scandal increased every day, the colonel forced the bandmaster to resign.

When Lucie heard the news, she looked vexed, and said spitefully:

"I had hoped that he would have blown his brains out!"

A VAGABOND



For more than a month Randel had been walking, seeking for work everywhere. He had left his native place, Ville-Avary, in the department of La Manche, because there was no work to be had. He was a journeyman carpenter, twenty-seven years old, a steady fellow and good workman, but for two months, he, the eldest son, had been obliged to live on his family, with nothing to do but loaf in the general stoppage of work. Bread was getting scarce with them; the two sisters went out as charwomen, but earned little, and he, Jacques Randel, the strongest of them all, did nothing because he had nothing to do, and ate the others' bread.

Then he went and inquired at the town-hall, and the mayor's secretary told him that he would find work at the Labor-Center. So he started, well provided with papers and certificates, and carrying another pair of shoes, a pair of trousers, and a shirt in a blue handkerchief at the end of his stick.

He had walked almost without stopping, day and night, along interminable roads, in the sun and rain, without ever reaching that mysterious country where workmen find work. At first he had the fixed idea that he must only work at his own trade, but at every carpenter's shop where he applied he was told that they had just dismissed men on account of work being so slack, and finding himself at the end of his resources, he made up his mind to undertake any job that he might come across on the road. And so by turns he was a navvy, stableman, stone-sawyer; he split wood, lopped the branches of trees, dug wells, mixed mortar, tied up faggots, tended goats on a mountain, and all for a few pence, for he only obtained two or three days' work occasionally, by offering himself at a shamefully low price, in order to tempt the avarice of employers and peasants.

And now for a week he had found nothing and he had no money left. He was eating a piece of bread, thanks to the charity of some women from whom he had begged at house-doors, on the road. It was getting dark, and Jacques Randel, jaded, his legs failing him, his stomach empty, and with despair in his heart, was walking barefoot on the grass by the side of the road, for he was taking care of his last pair of shoes, the other pair having already ceased to exist for a long time. It was a Saturday, toward the end of autumn. The heavy gray clouds were being driven rapidly through the sky by gusts of wind that whistled among the trees, and one felt that it would rain soon. The country was deserted at that time of the evening, and on the eve of Sunday. Here and there in the fields there rose up

stacks of thrashed-out corn, like huge yellow mushrooms, and the fields looked bare, as they had already been sown for the next year.

Randel was hungry, with the hunger of some wild animal, such a hunger as drives wolves to attack men. Worn out and weakened with fatigue, he took longer strides, so as not to take so many steps, and with heavy head, the blood throbbing in his temples, with red eyes and dry mouth, he grasped his stick tightly in his hand, with a longing to strike the first passer-by whom he should meet, and who might be going home to supper, with all his force.

He looked at the sides of the road, with the image of potatoes dug up and lying on the ground, before his eyes; if he had found any, he would have gathered some dead wood, made a fire in the ditch, and have had a capital supper off the warm, round tubers, which he would first of all have held burning hot in his cold hands. But it was too late in the year and he would have to gnaw a raw beet-root, as he had done the day before, having picked one up in a field.

For the last two days he had spoken aloud as he quickened his steps, under the influence of his thoughts. He had never done much thinking, hitherto, as he had given all his mind, all his simple faculties, to his industrial requirements. But now fatigue, and this desperate search for work which he could not get, refusals and rebuffs, nights spent in the open air lying on the grass, long fasting, the contempt which he knew people with a settled abode felt for a vagabond, the question which he was continually asked: "Why did you not remain at home?"

distress at not being able to use his strong arms which he felt so full of vigor, the recollection of his relations who had remained at home and who also had not a half-penny, filled him by degrees with a rage which was accumulating every day, every hour, every minute, and which now escaped his lips in spite of himself in short, growling sentences.

As he stumbled over the stones which rolled beneath his bare feet, he grumbled: "How wretched! how miserable! A set of hogs, to let a man die of hunger, a carpenter. A set of hogs—not twopence—not twopence. And now it is raining—a set of hogs!"

He was indignant at the injustice of fate, and cast the blame on men, on all men, because Nature, that great, blind mother, is unjust, cruel and perfidious, and he repeated through his clenched teeth, "A set of hogs," as he looked at the thin gray smoke which rose from the roofs, for it was the dinner hour. And without thinking about that other injustice, which is human, and which is called robbery and violence, he felt inclined to go into one of those houses to murder the inhabitants, and to sit down to table, in their stead.

He said to himself: "I have a right to live, and they are letting me die of hunger—and yet I only ask for work—a set of hogs!" And the pain in his limbs, the gnawing in his heart, rose to his head like terrible intoxication, and gave rise to this simple thought in his brain: "I have the right to live because I breathe, and because the air is the common property of everybody, and so nobody has the right to leave me without bread!"

A thick, fine, icy cold rain was coming down, and he stopped and murmured: "How miserable! another month of walking before I get home." He was indeed returning home then; for he saw that he should more easily find work in his native town where he was known — and he did not mind what he did — than on the highroads, where everybody suspected him. As the carpentering business was not going well he would turn day-laborer, be a mason's hodman, ditcher, break stones on the road. If he only earned tenpence a day, that would at any rate find him something to eat.

He tied the remains of his last pocket handkerchief round his neck to prevent the cold water from running down his back and chest; but he soon found that it was penetrating the thin material of which his clothes were made, and he glanced round him with the agonized look of a man who does not know where to hide his body and to rest his head, and has no place of shelter in the whole world.

Night came on and wrapped the country in obscurity, and in the distance, in a meadow, he saw a dark spot on the grass; it was a cow, and so he got over the ditch by the roadside and went up to her, without exactly knowing what he was doing. When he got close to her, she raised her great head to him, and he thought: "If I only had a jug, I could get a little milk." He looked at the cow, and the cow looked at him, and then suddenly giving her a violent kick in the side, he said: "Get up!"

The animal got up slowly, letting her heavy udder hang down below her; then the man lay down on his back between the animal's legs, and drank for

a long time, squeezing the warm swollen teats which tasted of the cow-stall, with both hands, and drank as long as any milk remained in that living well. But the icy rain began to fall more heavily, and he saw no place of shelter on the whole of that bare plain. He was cold, and he looked at a light which was shining among the trees, in the window of a house.

The cow had lain down again, heavily, and he sat down by her side and stroked her head, grateful for the nourishment she had given him. The animal's strong, thick breath, which came out of her nostrils like two jets of steam in the evening air, blew on to the workman's face, who said: "You are not cold, inside there!" He put his hands on to her chest and under her legs, to find some warmth there, and then the idea struck him that he might pass the night against that large, warm stomach. So he found a comfortable place and laid his forehead against the great udder from which he had quenched his thirst just previously, and then, as he was worn out with fatigue, he fell asleep immediately.

He woke up, however, several times, with his back or his stomach half frozen, according as he put one or the other to the animal's flank. Then he turned over to warm and dry that part of his body which had remained exposed to the night air, and he soon went soundly to sleep again.

The crowing of a cock woke him; the day was breaking, it was no longer raining and the sky was bright. The cow was resting with her muzzle on the ground, and he stooped down, resting on his hands, to kiss those wide nostrils of moist flesh, and

said: "Good-bye, my beauty, until next time. You are a nice animal! Good-bye." Then he put on his shoes and went off, and for two hours he walked straight on before him, always following the same road, and then he felt so tired that he sat down on the grass. It was broad daylight by that time, and the church bells were ringing; men in blue blouses, women in white caps, some on foot, some in carts, began to pass along the road, going to the neighboring villages to spend Sunday with friends or relations.

A stout peasant came in sight, driving a score of frightened, bleating sheep in front of him, whom an active dog kept together, so Randel got up and raising his cap, he said: "You do not happen to have any work for a man who is dying of hunger?" But the other, giving an angry look at the vagabond, replied: "I have no work for fellows whom I meet on the road."

And the carpenter went back and sat down by the side of the ditch again. He waited there for a long time, watching the country people pass, and looking for a kind, compassionate face before he renewed his request, and finally selected a man in an overcoat, whose stomach was adorned with a gold chain. "I have been looking for work," he said, "for the last two months and cannot find any, and I have not a half-penny in my pocket."

But the semi-gentleman replied: "You should have read the notice which is stuck up at the beginning of the village: 'Begging is prohibited within the boundaries of this parish.' Let me tell you that I am the mayor, and if you do not get out of here pretty quickly, I shall have you arrested."

Randel, who was getting angry, replied: "Have me arrested if you like; I should prefer it, for at any rate I should not die of hunger." And he went back and sat down by the side of his ditch again, and in about a quarter of an hour two gendarmes appeared on the road. They were walking slowly, side by side, well in sight, glittering in the sun with their shining hats, their yellow accouterments and their metal buttons, as if to frighten evildoers, and to put them to flight at a distance. He knew that they were coming after him, but he did not move, for he was seized with a sudden desire to defy them, to be arrested by them, and to have his revenge later.

They came on without appearing to have seen him, walking with military steps, heavily, and balancing themselves as if they were doing the goose-step; and then suddenly as they passed him, they noticed him and stopped, looking at him angrily and threateningly. The brigadier came up to him and asked: "What are you doing here?"

"I am resting," the man replied, calmly.

"Where do you come from?"

"If I had to tell you all the places I have been to, it would take me more than an hour."

"Where are you going to?"

"To Ville-Avary."

"Where is that?"

"In La Manche."

"Is that where you belong to?"

"It is."

"Why did you leave it?"

"To try for work."

The brigadier turned to his gendarme, and said, in the angry voice of a man who is exasperated at last by the same trick: "They all say that, these scamps. I know all about it." And then he continued: "Have you any papers?"

"Yes, I have some."

"Give them to me."

Randel took his papers out of his pocket, his certificates, those poor, worn-out, dirty papers which were falling to pieces, and gave them to the soldier, who spelled them through, hemming and hawing and then having seen that they were all in order, he gave them back to Randel with the dissatisfied look of a man whom some one cleverer than himself has tricked.

After a few moments further reflection, he asked him: "Have you any money on you?"

"No."

"None whatever?"

"None."

"Not even a sou?"

"Not even a sou!"

"How do you live then?"

"On what people give me."

"Then you beg?"

And Randel answered resolutely: "Yes, when I can."

Then the gendarme said: "I have caught you on the highroad in the act of vagabondage and begging, without any resources or trade, and so I command you to come with me."

The carpenter got up and said: "Wherever you please." And placing himself between the two sol-

diers, even before he had received the order to do so, he added: "Come, lock me up; that will at any rate put a roof over my head when it rains."

And they set off toward the village, whose red tiles could be seen through the leafless trees, a quarter of a league off. Service was just going to begin when they went through the village. The square was full of people, who immediately formed two hedges to see the criminal, who was being followed by a crowd of excited children, pass. Male and female peasants looked at the prisoner between the two gendarmes, with hatred in their eyes, and a longing to throw stones at him, to tear his skin with their nails, to trample him under their feet. They asked each other whether he had committed murder or robbery. The butcher, who was an ex-Spahi declared that he was a deserter. The tobacconist thought that he recognized him as the man who had that very morning passed a bad half-franc piece off on him, and the ironmonger declared that he was the murderer of widow Malet, for whom the police had been looking, for six months.

In the hall of the municipal council, into which his custodians took him, Randel saw the mayor again, sitting on the magisterial bench, with the schoolmaster by his side.

"Ah! ah!" the magistrate exclaimed, "so here you are again, my fine fellow. I told you I should have you locked up. Well, brigadier, what is he charged with?"

"He is a vagabond without house or home, Monsieur le Maire, without any resources or money, so he says, who was arrested in the act of begging, but

he is provided with good testimonials, and his papers are all in order."

"Show me his papers," the mayor said. He took them, read them, re-read, returned them, and then said: "Search him"; so they searched him, but found nothing, and the mayor seemed perplexed, and asked the workman:

"What were you doing on the road this morning?"

"I was looking for work."

"Work? On the highroad?"

"How do you expect me to find any if I hide in the woods?"

They looked at each other, with the hatred of two wild beasts which belong to different, hostile species, and the magistrate continued: "I am going to have you set at liberty, but do not be brought up before me again."

To which the carpenter replied: "I would rather you locked me up; I have had enough running about the country."

But the magistrate replied severely: "Be silent." And then he said to the two gendarmes: "You will conduct this man two hundred yards from the village, and let him continue his journey."

"At any rate, give me something to eat," the workman said; but the other grew indignant: "It only remains for us to feed you! Ah! ah! ah! that is rather strong!"

But Randel went on, firmly: "If you let me nearly die of hunger again, you will force me to commit a crime, and then, so much the worse for you other fat fellows."

The mayor had risen, and he repeated: "Take him away immediately, or I shall end by getting angry."

The two gendarmes thereupon seized the carpenter by the arms and dragged him out. He allowed them to do it without resistance, passed through the village again, and found himself on the highroad once more; and when the men had accompanied him two hundred yards beyond the village, the brigadier said: "Now off with you, and do not let me catch you about here again, for if I do, you will know it."

Randel went off without replying, or knowing where he was going. He walked on for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, so stupefied that he no longer thought of anything. But suddenly, as he was passing a small house, where the window was half open, the smell of the soup and boiled meat stopped him suddenly in front of it, and hunger, fierce, devouring, maddening hunger seized him, and almost drove him against the walls of the house, like a wild beast.

He said aloud, in a grumbling voice: "In Heaven's name! they must give me some, this time." And he began to knock at the door vigorously with his stick, and as nobody came he knocked louder and called out: "Hallo! you people in there, open the door!" And then, as nothing moved, he went up to the window, and pushed it open with his hand, and the close warm air of the kitchen, full of the smell of hot soup, meat, and cabbage escaped into the cold, outer air, and with a bound the carpenter was in the house. Two covers were laid on the table; no doubt the proprietors of the house, on going to church, had left their dinner on the fire, their nice, Sunday boiled

beef and vegetable soup, while there was a loaf of new bread on the chimney-piece, between two bottles which seemed full.

Randel seized the bread first of all, and broke it with as much violence as if he were strangling a man, and then he began to eat it voraciously, swallowing great mouthfuls quickly. But almost immediately the smell of the meat attracted him to the fireplace, and having taken off the lid of the saucepan, he plunged a fork into it and brought out a large piece of beef, tied with a string. Then he took more cabbage, carrots, and onions until his plate was full, and having put it on to the table, he sat down before it, cut the meat into four pieces, and dined as if he had been at home. When he had eaten nearly all the meat, besides a quantity of vegetables, he felt thirsty, and took one of the bottles off the mantelpiece.

Scarcely had he poured the liquor into his glass than he saw it was brandy. So much the better; it was warming; it would instill some fire into his veins, and that would be all right, after being so cold; and he drank some. He found it very good, certainly, for he had grown unaccustomed to it, and he poured himself out another glassful, which he drank at two gulps. And then, almost immediately he felt quite merry and light-hearted from the effect of the alcohol, just as if some great happiness were flowing through his system.

He continued to eat, but more slowly, dipping his bread into the soup. His skin had become burning, and especially his forehead, where the veins were throbbing. But suddenly the church bells began to ring. Mass was over, and instinct rather than fear,

the instinct of prudence which guides all beings, and makes them clear-sighted in danger, made the carpenter get up. He put the remains of the loaf into one pocket, and the brandy bottle into the other, and he furtively went to the window and looked out into the road. It was still deserted, so he jumped out and set off walking again, but instead of following the highroad, he ran across the fields toward a wood which he saw a little way off.

He felt alert, strong, light-hearted, glad of what he had done, and so nimble that he sprang over the inclosures of the fields, at a single bound, and as soon as he was under the trees, he took the bottle out of his pocket again, and began to drink once more, swallowing it down as he walked, and then his ideas began to get confused, his eyes grew dim, and his legs as elastic as springs, and he started singing the old popular song:

"Oh! how nice, how nice it is,
To pick the sweet, wild strawberries."

He was now walking on thick, damp, cool moss, and the soft carpet under his feet made him feel absurdly inclined to turn head over heels, like he used to do as a child; so he took a run, turned a somersault, got up, and began over again. And between each time, he began to sing again:

"Oh! how nice, how nice it is,
To pick the sweet, wild strawberries."

Suddenly he found himself on the edge of a sunken road, and in the road he saw a tall girl, a servant who was returning to the village with two pails of

milk. He watched, stooping down and with his eyes as bright as those of a dog who scents a quail, but she saw him, raised her head and said: "Was that you singing like that?" He did not reply, however, but jumped down into the road, although it was at least six feet down, and when she saw him suddenly standing in front of her, she exclaimed: "Oh! dear, how you frightened me!"

But he did not hear her, for he was drunk, he was mad, excited by another requirement which was more imperative than hunger, more feverish than alcohol; by the irresistible fury of the man who has been in want of everything for two months, and who is drunk; who is young, ardent, and inflamed by all the appetites which nature has implanted in the flesh of vigorous men.

The girl started back from him, frightened at his face, his eyes, his half-open mouth, his outstretched hands, but he seized her by the shoulders, and without a word threw her down in the road.

She let her two pails fall, and they rolled over noisily, and all the milk was spilt, and then she screamed, but comprehending that it would be of no use to call for help in that lonely spot, and seeing that he was not going to make an attempt on her life, she yielded without much difficulty, and not very angrily either, for he was a strong, handsome young fellow, and really not rough.

When she got up, the thought of her overturned pails suddenly filled her with fury, and taking off one of her wooden clogs, she threw it, in her turn, at the man to break his head, since he did not pay her for her milk.

But he, mistaking the reason for this sudden violent attack, somewhat sobered, and frightened at what he had done, ran off as fast as he could while she threw stones at him, some of which hit him in the back.

He ran for a long time, very long, until he felt more tired than he had ever been before. His legs were so weak that they could scarcely carry him; all his ideas were confused, he lost the recollection of everything, and could no longer think about anything; and so he sat down at the foot of a tree, and in five minutes was fast asleep. He was soon awakened, however, by a rough shake and, on opening his eyes he saw two cocked hats of polished leather bending over him, and the two gendarmes of the morning, who were holding him and binding his arms.

"I knew I should catch you again," said the brigadier, jeeringly. But Randel got up without replying. The two men shook him, quite ready to ill treat him if he made a movement, for he was their prey now, he had become a jail-bird, caught by hunters of criminals who would not let him go again.

"Now, start!" the brigadier said, and they set off. It was getting evening, and the autumn twilight was settling, heavy and dark, over the land, and in half an hour they reached the village, where every door was open, for the people had heard what had happened. Peasants and peasant women and girls, excited with anger, as if every man had been robbed, and every woman violated, wished to see the wretch brought back, so that they might overwhelm him with

abuse. They hooted him from the first house in the village until they reached the mansion-house, where the mayor was waiting for him. Eager to avenge himself on this vagabond as soon as he saw him, he cried:

"Ah! my fine fellow! here we are!" And he rubbed his hands, more pleased than he usually was, and continued: "I said so. I said so, the moment I saw him in the road." And then with increased satisfaction:

"Oh! you blackguard! Oh! you dirty blackguard! You will get your twenty years, my fine fellow!"

THE MOUNTEBANKS

COMPARDIN, the clever manager of the Eden Réunis Theater, as the theater critics invariably called him, was reckoning on a great success, and had invested his last franc in the affair, without thinking of the morrow, or of the bad luck which had been pursuing him so inexorably for months past. For a whole week, the walls, the kiosks, shopfronts, and even the trees, had been placarded with flaming posters, and from one end of Paris to the other carriages were to be seen which were covered with fancy sketches by Chéret, representing two strong, well-built men who looked like ancient athletes. The younger of them, who was standing with his arms folded, had the vacant smile of an itinerant mountebank, and the other, who was dressed in what was supposed to be the costume of a Mexican trapper, held a revolver in his hand. There were large-type advertisements in all the papers that the Montefiores would appear without fail at the Eden Réunis, the next Monday.

Nothing else was talked about, for the puff and humbug attracted people. The Montefiores, like fashionable knickknacks, succeeded that whimsical jade Rose Péché, who had gone off the preceding autumn, between the third and fourth acts of the burlesque, "Ousca Iscar," in order to make a study of love in company of a young fellow of seventeen, who had just entered the university. The novelty and difficulty of their performance revived and agitated the curiosity of the public, for there seemed to be an implied threat of death, or, at any rate, of wounds and of blood in it, and it seemed as if they defied danger with absolute indifference. And that always pleases women; it holds them and masters them, and they grow pale with emotion and cruel enjoyment. Consequently, all the seats in the large theater were let almost immediately, and were soon taken for several days in advance. And stout Compardin, losing his glass of absinthe over a game of dominoes, was in high spirits, seeing the future through rosy glasses, and exclaimed in a loud voice: "I think I have turned up trumps, by George!"

* * * * * * *

The Countess Regina de Villégby was lying on the sofa in her boudoir, languidly fanning herself. She had only received three or four intimate friends that day, Saint Mars Montalvin, Tom Sheffield, and her cousin Madame de Rhouel, a Creole, who laughed as incessantly as a bird sings. It was growing dusk, and the distant rumbling of the carriages in the Avenue of the Champs-Elysées sounded like some somnolent rhythm. There was a delicate perfume of

flowers; the lamps had not been brought in yet, and chatting and laughing filled the room with a confused noise.

"Would you pour out the tea?" the Countess said, suddenly, touching Saint Mars's fingers, who was beginning an amorous conversation in a low voice, with her fan. And while he slowly filled the little china cup, he continued: "Are the Montefiores as good as the lying newspapers make out?"

Then Tom Sheffield and the others all joined in. They had never seen anything like it, they declared; it was most exciting, and made one shiver unpleasantly, as when the *espada* comes to close quarters with the infuriated brute at a bull fight.

Countess Regina listened in silence, and nibbled the petals of a tea rose.

"How I should like to see them!" giddy Madame de Rhouel exclaimed.

"Unfortunately, cousin," the Countess said, in the solemn tones of a preacher, "a respectable woman dare not let herself be seen in improper places."

They all agreed with her. Nevertheless, Madame de Villégby was present at the Montefiores' performance, two days later, dressed all in black, and wearing a thick veil, at the back of a stage box.

Madame de Villégby was as cold as a steel buckler. She had married as soon as she left the convent in which she had been educated, without any affection or even liking for her husband; the most sceptical respected her as a saint, and she had a look of virgin purity on her calm face as she went down the steps of the Madeleine on Sundays, after high mass.

Countess Regina stretched herself nervously, grew pale, and trembled like the strings of a violin, on which an artist had been playing some wild symphony. She inhaled the nasty smell of the sawdust, as if it had been the perfume of a bouquet of unknown flowers; she clenched her hands, and gazed eagerly at the two mountebanks, whom the public applauded rapturously at every feat. And contemptuously and haughtily she compared those two men, who were as vigorous as wild animals that have grown up in the open air, with the rickety limbs that look so awkward in the dress of an English groom.

* * * * * * *

Count de Villégby had gone back to the country, to prepare for his election as Councilor-General, and the very evening that he started, Regina again took the stage box at the Eden Réunis. Consumed by sensual ardor as if by some love philter, she scribbled a few words on a piece of paper — the eternal formula that women write on such occasions.

"A carriage will be waiting for you at the stage door after the performance — *An unknown woman who adores you.*"

And then she gave it to a box opener, who handed it to the Montefiore who was the champion pistol shot.

Oh! that interminable waiting in a malodorous cab, the overwhelming emotion, and the nausea of disgust, the fear, the desire of waking the coachman who was nodding on the box, of giving him her address, and telling him to drive her home. But she remained with her face against the window, mechanic-

ally watching the dark passage illuminated by a gas lamp, at the "actors' entrance," through which men were continually hurrying, who talked in a loud voice, and chewed the end of cigars which had gone out. She sat as if she were glued to the cushions, and tapped impatiently on the bottom of the cab with her heels.

When the actor, who thought it was a joke, made his appearance, she could hardly utter a word, for evil pleasure is as intoxicating as adulterated liquor. So face to face with this immediate surrender, and this unconstrained immodesty, he at first thought that he had to do with a street-walker.

Regina felt various sensations, and a morbid pleasure throughout her whole person. She pressed close to him, and raised her veil to show how young, beautiful, and desirable she was. They did not speak a word, like wrestlers before a combat. She was eager to be locked up with him, to give herself to him, and, at last, to know that moral uncleanness, of which she was, of course, ignorant, as a chaste wife; and when they left the room in the hotel together, where they had spent hours like amorous deer, the man dragged himself along, and almost groped his way like a blind man, while Regina was smiling, though she exhibited the serene candor of an unsullied virgin, like she did on Sundays, after mass.

Then she took the second. He was very sentimental, and his head was full of romance. He thought the unknown woman, who merely used him as her plaything, really loved him, and he was not satisfied with furtive meetings. He questioned her, besought her, and the Countess made fun of him.

Then she chose the two mountebanks in turn. They did not know it, for she had forbidden them ever to talk about her to each other, under the penalty of never seeing her again, and one night the younger of them said with humble tenderness, as he knelt at her feet:

"How kind you are, to love me and to want me! I thought that such happiness only existed in novels, and that ladies of rank only made fun of poor strolling mountebanks, like us!"

Regina knitted her golden brows.

"Do not be angry," he continued, "because I followed you and found out where you lived, and your real name, and that you are a countess, and rich, very rich."

"You fool!" she exclaimed, trembling with anger. "People make you believe things, as easily as they can a child!"

She had had enough of him; he knew her name, and might compromise her. The Count might possibly come back from the country before the elections, and then the mountebank began to love her. She no longer had any feeling, any desire for those two lovers, whom a fillip from her rosy fingers could bend to her will. It was time to go on to the next chapter, and to seek for fresh pleasures elsewhere.

"Listen to me," she said to the champion shot, the next night, "I would rather not hide anything from you. I like your comrade; I have given myself to him, and I do not want to have anything more to do with you."

"My comrade!" he repeated.

"Well, what then? The change amuses me!"

He uttered a furious cry, and rushed at Regina with clenched fists. She thought he was going to kill her, and closed her eyes, but he had not the courage to hurt that delicate body, which he had so often covered with caresses, and in despair, and hanging his head, he said hoarsely:

"Very well, we shall not meet again, since it is your wish."

The house at the Eden Réunis was as full as an overfilled basket. The violins were playing a soft and delightful waltz of Gungl's, which the reports of a revolver accentuated.

The Montefiores were standing opposite to one another, as in Chéret's picture, and about a dozen yards apart. An electric light was thrown on the younger, who was leaning against a large white target, and very slowly the other traced his living outline with bullet after bullet. He aimed with prodigious skill, and the black dots showed on the cardboard, and marked the shape of his body. The applause drowned the orchestra, and increased continually, when suddenly a shrill cry of horror resounded from one end of the hall to the other. The women fainted, the violins stopped, and the spectators jostled each other. At the ninth ball, the younger brother had fallen to the ground, an inert mass, with a gaping wound in his forehead. His brother did not move, and there was a look of madness on his face, while the Countess de Villégby leaned on the ledge of her box, and fanned herself calmly, as implacably as any cruel goddess of ancient mythology.

The next day, between four and five, when she was surrounded by her usual friends in her little,

warm, Japanese drawing-room, it was strange to hear in what a languid and indifferent voice she exclaimed:

"They say that an accident happened to one of those famous clowns, the Monta — the Monte — what is the name, Tom?"

"The Montefiores, Madame!"

And then they began to talk about Angèle Velours, who was going to buy the former Folies, at the Hôtel Drouot, before marrying Prince Storbeck.

UGLY

CERTAINLY, at this blessed epoch of the equality of mediocrity, of rectangular abomination, as Edgar Allan Poe says — at this delightful period, when everybody dreams of resembling everybody else, so that it has become impossible to tell the President of the Republic from a waiter — in these days which are the forerunners of that promising, blissful day, when everything in this world will be of a dull, neutral uniformity, certainly at such an epoch, one has the right, or rather it is one's duty, to be ugly.

Lebeau, however, assuredly exercised that right with the most cruel vigor. He fulfilled that duty with the fiercest heroism, and to make matters worse, the mysterious irony of fate had caused him to be born with the name of Lebeau, while an ingenious god-father, the unconscious accomplice of the pranks of destiny, had given him the Christian name of Antinous.*

*A youth of extraordinary beauty, page to the Emperor Hadrian (A. D. 117–138), and the object of his extravagant affection. He was drowned in the Nile, whether by accident, or in order to escape from the life he was leading, is uncertain.

Even among our contemporaries, who were already on the highroad to the coming ideal of universal hideousness, Antinous Lebeau was remarkable for his ugliness, and one might have said that he positively threw zeal, too much zeal, into the matter, though he was not hideous like Mirabeau, who made people exclaim, "Oh! the beautiful monster!"

Alas! No. He was without any beauty, even without the beauty of ugliness. He was ugly, that was all, nothing more nor less: in short, he was uglily ugly. He was not humpbacked, nor knock-kneed, nor pot-bellied; his legs were not like a pair of tongs, and his arms were neither too long nor too short, and yet, there was an utter lack of uniformity about him, not only in painters' eyes, but also in everybody's, for nobody could meet him in the street without turning to look after him, and thinking: "Good heavens! what an object."

His hair was of no particular color; a light chestnut, mixed with yellow. There was not much of it; still, he was not absolutely bald, but just bald enough to allow his butter-colored pate to show. Butter-colored? Hardly! The color of margarine would be more applicable, and such pale margarine!

His face was also like margarine, but of adulterated margarine, certainly. His cranium, the color of unadulterated margarine, looked almost like butter, in comparison.

There was very little to say about his mouth! Less than little; the sum total was — nothing. It was a chimerical mouth.

But take it that I have said nothing about him, and let us replace this vain description by the use-

ful formula: "Impossible to describe." But you must not forget that Antinous Lebeau was ugly, that the fact impressed everybody as soon as they saw him, and that nobody remembered ever having seen an uglier person; and let us add, as the climax of his misfortune, that he thought so himself.

From this you will see that he was not a fool, and not ill-natured either; but, of course, he was unhappy. An unhappy man thinks only of his wretchedness, and people take his nightcap for a fool's cap, while, on the other hand, goodness is only esteemed when it is cheerful. Consequently, Antinous Lebeau passed for a fool, and an ill-tempered fool; he was not even pitied because he was so ugly!

He had only one pleasure in life, and that was to go and roam about the darkest streets on dark nights, and to hear the street-walkers say:

"Come home with me, you handsome, dark man!"

It was, alas! a furtive pleasure, and he knew that it was not true. For, occasionally, when the woman was old or drunk and he profited by the invitation, as soon as the candle was lighted in the garret, they no longer murmured the fallacious "handsome, dark man." When they saw him, the old women grew still older, and the drunken women got sober. And more than one, although hardened against disgust and ready for all risks, said to him, in spite of liberal payment:

"My little man, I must say, you are most confoundedly ugly."

At last, however, he renounced even that lamentable pleasure, when he heard the still more lamentable words which a wretched woman could not help uttering when he went home with her:

"Well, I must have been very hungry!"

Alas! It was he was hungry, unhappy man; hungry for something that should resemble love, were it ever so little; he longed not to live like a pariah any more, not to be exiled and proscribed by his ugliness. And the ugliest, the most repugnant woman would have appeared beautiful to him, if she would only not think him ugly, or, at any rate, not tell him so, and not let him see that she felt horror at him on that account.

The consequence was, that, when he one day met a poor, blear-eyed creature, with her face covered with scabs, and bearing evident signs of alcoholism, with a driveling mouth, and ragged and filthy petticoats, to whom he gave liberal alms, for which she kissed his hand, he took her home with him, had her cleansed, dressed, and taken care of, made her his servant, and then his housekeeper. Next he raised her to the rank of his mistress, and, finally, of course, he married her.

She was almost as ugly as he was! Almost, but certainly not quite; for she was hideous, and her hideousness had its charm and its beauty, no doubt; that something by which a woman can attract a man. And she had proved that by deceiving him, and she let him see it better still, by seducing another man.

That other man was actually uglier than he was.

He was certainly uglier, a collection of every physical and moral ugliness, a companion of beggars whom she had picked up among her former vagrant associates, a jail-bird, a dealer in little girls, a vagabond covered with filth, with legs like a toad's,

with a mouth like a lamprey's, and a death's head, in which the nose had been replaced by two holes.

"And you have wronged me with a wretch like that," the poor cuckold said. "And in my own house! and in such a manner that I might catch you in the very act! And why, why, you wretch? Why, seeing that he is uglier than I am?"

"Oh! no," she exclaimed. "You may say what you like, that I am a dirty slut and a strumpet; but do not say that he is uglier than you are."

And the unhappy man stood there, vanquished and overcome by her last words, which she uttered without understanding all the horror which he would feel at them.

"Because, you see, he has his own particular ugliness, while you are merely ugly like everybody else is."

THE DEBT

"Pst! Pst! Come with me, you handsome, dark fellow. I am very nice, as you will see. Do come up. At any rate you will be able to warm yourself, for I have a capital fire at home."

But nothing enticed the foot-passengers, neither being called a handsome, dark fellow, which she applied quite impartially to old or fat men also, nor the promise of pleasure which was emphasized by a caressing ogle and smile, nor even the promise of a good fire, which was so attractive in the bitter December wind. And tall Fanny continued her useless walk, and the night advanced and foot-passengers grew scarcer. In another hour the streets would be absolutely deserted, and unless she could manage to pick up some belated drunken man, she would be obliged to return home alone.

And yet tall Fanny was a beautiful woman! With the head of a Bacchante, and the body of a goddess,

in all the full splendor of her twenty-three years, she deserved something better than this miserable pavement, where she could not even pick up the five francs which she wanted for the requirements of the next day. But there! In this infernal Paris, in this swarming crowd of competitors who all jostled each other, courtesans, like artists, did not attain to eminence until their later years. In that they resembled precious stones, as the most valuable of them are those that have been set the oftenest.

And that was why tall Fanny, who was later to become one of the richest and most brilliant stars of Parisian gallantry, was walking about the streets on this bitter December night without a half-penny in her pocket, in spite of the head of a Bacchante, and the body of a goddess, and in all the full splendor of her twenty-three years.

However, it was too late now to hope to meet anybody; there was not a single foot-passenger about; the street was decidedly empty, dull, and lifeless. Nothing was to be heard, except the whistling of sudden gusts of wind, and nothing was to be seen, except the flickering gas lights, which looked like dying butterflies. Well! The only thing was to return home alone.

But suddenly, tall Fanny saw a human form standing on the pavement at the next crossing. It seemed to be hesitating and uncertain which way to go. The figure, which was very small and slight, was wrapped in a long cloak, which reached almost to the ground.

"Perhaps he is a hunchback," the girl said to herself. "They like tall women!" And she walked

quickly toward him, from habit already saying: "*Pst! Pst!* Come home with me, you handsome, dark fellow!" What luck! The man did not go away, but came toward Fanny, although somewhat timidly, while she went to meet him, repeating her wheedling words, so as to reassure him. She went all the quicker, as she saw that he was staggering with the zigzag walk of a drunken man, and she thought to herself: "When once they sit down, there is no possibility of getting these beggars up again, for they want to go to sleep just where they are. I only hope I shall get to him before he tumbles down."

Luckily she reached him just in time to catch him in her arms, but as soon as she had done so, she almost let him fall, in her astonishment. It was neither a drunken man, nor a hunchback, but a child of twelve or thirteen in an overcoat, who was crying, and who said in a weak voice: "I beg your pardon, Madame, I beg your pardon. If you only knew how hungry and cold I am! I beg your pardon! Oh! I am so cold."

"Poor child!" she said, putting her arms around him and kissing him. And she carried him off, with a full, but happy heart, and while he continued to sob, she said to him mechanically: "Don't be frightened, my little man. You will see how nice I can be! And then, you can warm yourself; I have a capital fire."

But the fire was out: the room, however, was warm, and the child said, as soon as they got in: "Oh! How comfortable it is here! It is a great deal better than in the streets, I can tell you! And I

have been living in the streets for six days." He began to cry again, and added: "I beg your pardon, Madame. I have eaten nothing for two days."

Tall Fanny opened her cupboard, which had glass doors. The middle shelf held all her linen, and on the upper one there was a box of Albert biscuits, a drop of brandy at the bottom of a bottle, and a few small lumps of sugar in a cup. With that and some water out of a jug, she concocted a sort of broth, which he swallowed ravenously, and when he had done, he wished to tell his story, which he did, yawning all the time.

His grandfather (the only one of his relatives whom he had ever known), who had been a painter and decorator at Soisson, had died about a month before; but before his death he had said to him:

"When I am gone, little man, you will find a letter to my brother, who is in business in Paris, among my papers. You must take it to him, and he will be certain to take care of you. However, in any case you must go to Paris, for you have an aptitude for painting, and only there can you hope to become an artist."

When the old man was dead (he died in the hospital), the child started, dressed in an old coat of his grandfather's, and with thirty francs, which was all that the old man had left behind him, in his pocket. But when he got to Paris, there was nobody of the name at the address mentioned on the letter. The dead man's brother had left there six months before; nobody knew where he had gone to, and so the child was alone. For a few days he managed to exist on what he had over, after paying for his journey.

After he had spent his last franc, he had wandered about the streets, as he had no money with which to pay for a bed, buying his bread by the half-penny-worth, until for the last forty-eight hours he had been without anything, absolutely without anything.

He told her all this while he was half asleep, amid sobs and yawns, so that the girl did not venture to ask him any more questions, in spite of her curiosity, but, on the contrary, cut him short, and undressed him while she listened, and only interrupted him to kiss him, and to say to him: "There, there, my poor child! You shall tell me the rest to-morrow. You cannot go on now, so go to bed and have a good sleep." And as soon as he had finished, she put him to bed, where he immediately fell into a profound sleep. Then she undressed herself quickly, got into bed by his side, so that she might keep him warm, and went to sleep, crying to herself, without exactly knowing why.

The next day they breakfasted and dined together at a common eating-house, on money that she had borrowed, and when it was dark, she said to the child: "Wait for me here; I will come for you at closing time." She came back sooner, however, about ten o'clock. She had twelve francs, which she gave him, telling him that she had *earned them*, and she continued, with a laugh: "I feel that I shall make some more. I am in luck this evening, and you have brought it me. Do not be impatient, but have some milk-posset while you are waiting for me."

She kissed him, and the kind girl felt real maternal happiness as she went out. An hour later, however, she was arrested by the police for having been

found in a prohibited place, and off she went, food for St. Lazare.*

And the child, who was turned out by the proprietor at closing time, and then driven from the furnished lodgings the next morning, where they told him that *tall Fanny was in jail,* began his wretched vagabond life in the streets again, with only the twelve francs to depend on.

* * * * * * *

Fifteen years afterward, the newspapers announced one morning that the famous Fanny Clairet, the celebrated "horizontal," whose caprices had caused a revolution in high life, that queen of frail beauties for whom three men had committed suicide, and so many others had ruined themselves, that incomparable living statue, who had attracted all Paris to the theater where she impersonified Venus in her transparent skin tights, made of woven air and a knitted nothing, had been shut up in a lunatic asylum. She had been seized suddenly; it was an attack of general paralysis, and as her debts were enormous, when her estate had been liquidated, she would have to end her days at La Salpêtrière.

"No, certainly not!" François Guerland, the painter, said to himself, when he read the notice of it in the papers. "No, the great Fanny shall certainly not end like that." For it was certainly she; there could be no doubt about it. For a long time after she had shown him that act of charity, which he could never forget, the child had tried to see his benefactress

*A prison in Paris.

again. But Paris is a very mysterious place, and he himself had had many adventures before he grew up to be a man, and, eventually, almost somebody! But he only found her in the distance; he had recognized her at the theater, on the stage, or as she was getting into her carriage, which was fit for a princess. And how could he approach her then? Could he remind her of the time when her price was five francs? No, assuredly not; and so he had followed her, thanked her, and blessed her, from a distance.

But now the time had come for him to pay his debt, and he paid it. Although tolerably well known as a painter with a future in store for him, he was not rich. But what did that matter? He mortgaged that future which people prophesied for him, and gave himself over, bound hand and foot, to a picture-dealer. Then he had the poor woman taken to an excellent asylum, where she could have not only every care, but every necessary comfort and even luxury. Alas! however, general paralysis never forgives. Sometimes it releases its prey, like the cruel cat releases the mouse, for a brief moment, only to lay hold of it again later, more fiercely than ever. Fanny had that period of abatement in her symptoms, and one morning the physician was able to say to the young man: "You are anxious to remove her? Very well! But you will soon have to bring her back, for the cure is only apparent, and her present state will only endure for a month, at most, and then only if the patient is kept free from every excitement and excess!"

"And without that precaution?" Guerland asked him.

"Then," the doctor replied; "the final crisis will be all the nearer; that is all. But whether it would be nearer or more remote, it will not be the less fatal."

"You are sure of that?"

"Absolutely sure."

François Guerland took tall Fanny out of the asylum, installed her in splendid apartments, and went to live with her there. She had grown old, bloated, with white hair, and sometimes wandered in her mind, and she did not recognize in him the poor little lad on whom she had taken pity in the days gone by, nor did he remind her of the circumstance. He allowed her to believe that she was adored by a rich young man, who was passionately devoted to her. He was young, ardent, and caressing. Never had a mistress such a lover, and for three weeks before she relapsed into the horrors of madness, which were happily soon terminated by her death, she intoxicated herself with the ecstasy of his kisses, and thus bade farewell to conscient life in an apotheosis of love.

* * * * * * *

The other day at dessert, after an artists' dinner, they were speaking of François Guerland, whose last picture at the Salon had been so deservedly praised.

"Ah! yes," one of them said with a contemptuous voice and look—"That handsome fellow Guerland!"

And another, accentuating the insinuation, added boldly: "Yes, that is exactly it! That handsome, too handsome fellow Guerland, the man who allows himself to be kept by women."

A NORMANDY JOKE

THE procession came in sight in the hollow road which was shaded by the tall trees which grew on the slopes of the farm. The newly-married couple came first, then the relations, then the invited guests, and lastly the poor of the neighborhood, while the village urchins who hovered about the narrow road like flies, ran in and out of the ranks, or climbed up the trees to see it better.

The bridegroom was a good-looking young fellow, Jean Patu, the richest farmer in the neighborhood. Above all things, he was an ardent sportsman who seemed to lose all common sense in order to satisfy that passion, who spent large sums on his dogs, his keepers, his ferrets, and his guns. The bride, Rosalie Roussel, had been courted by all the likely young fellows in the district, for they all thought her prepossessing and they knew that she would have a good dowry, but she had chosen Patu —partly, perhaps, because she liked him better than

she did the others, but still more, like a careful Normandy girl, because he had more crown pieces.

When they went in at the white gateway of the husband's farm, forty shots resounded without any one seeing those who fired. The shooters were hidden in the ditches, and the noise seemed to please the men, who were sprawling about heavily in their best clothes, very much. Patu left his wife, and running up to a farm servant whom he perceived behind a tree, he seized his gun, and fired a shot himself, kicking his heels about like a colt. Then they went on, beneath the apple-trees heavy with fruit, through the high grass and through the herd of calves, who looked at them with their great eyes, got up slowly and remained standing with their muzzles turned toward the wedding party.

The men became serious when they came within measurable distance of the wedding-dinner. Some of them, the rich ones, had on tall, shining silk hats, which seemed altogether out of place there; others had old head-coverings with a long nap, which might have been taken for moleskin, while the humbler among them wore caps. All the women had on shawls, which they wore as loose wraps, holding the ends daintily under their arms. They were red, parti-colored, flaming shawls, and their brightness seemed to astonish the black fowls on the dung-heap, the ducks on the side of the pond, and the pigeons on the thatched roofs.

The extensive farm-buildings awaited the party at the end of that archway of apple-trees, and a sort of vapor came out of open door and windows, an almost overwhelming smell of eatables, which permeated the

vast building, issuing from its openings and even from its very walls. The string of guests extended through the yard; when the foremost of them reached the house, they broke the chain and dispersed, while behind they were still coming in at the open gate. The ditches were now lined with urchins and poor curious people. The shots did not cease, but came from every side at once, injecting a cloud of smoke, and that powdery smell which has the same intoxicating effects as absinthe, into the atmosphere.

The women were shaking their dresses outside the door to get rid of the dust, were undoing their cap strings and folding their shawls over their arms. Then they went into the house to lay them aside altogether for the time. The table was laid in the great kitchen, which could hold a hundred persons; they sat down to dinner at two o'clock and at eight o'clock they were still eating; the men, in their shirt sleeves, with their waistcoats unbuttoned, and with red faces, were swallowing the food and drink as if they were insatiable. The cider sparkled merrily, clear and golden in the large glasses, by the side of the dark, blood-colored wine, and between every dish they made the *trou*, the Normandy *trou*, with a glass of brandy which inflamed the body, and put foolish notions into the head.

From time to time, one of the guests, being as full as a barrel, would go out for a few moments to get a mouthful of fresh air, as they said, and then return with redoubled appetite. The farmers' wives, with scarlet faces and their corsets nearly bursting, did not like to follow their example, until one of them, feeling more uncomfortable than the others,

went out. Then all the rest followed her example, and came back quite ready for any fun, and the rough jokes began afresh. Broadsides of doubtful jokes were exchanged across the table, all about the wedding-night, until the whole arsenal of peasant wit was exhausted. For the last hundred years, the same broad jokes had served for similar occasions, and although everyone knew them, they still hit the mark, and made both rows of guests roar with laughter.

At the bottom of the table four young fellows, who were neighbors, were preparing some practical jokes for the newly-married couple, and they seemed to have got hold of a good one, by the way they whispered and laughed. Suddenly, one of them profiting by a moment of silence, exclaimed: "The poachers will have a good time to-night with this moon! I say, Jean, you will not be looking at the moon, will you?" The bridegroom turned to him quickly and replied: "Only let them come, that's all!" But the other young fellow began to laugh, and said: "I do not think you will neglect your duty for them!"

The whole table was convulsed with laughter, so that the glasses shook, but the bridegroom became furious at the thought that anybody should profit by his wedding to come and poach on his land, and repeated: "I only say: just let them come!"

Then there was a flood of talk with a double meaning which made the bride blush somewhat, although she was trembling with expectation, and when they had emptied the kegs of brandy they all went to bed. The young couple went into their own

room, which was on the ground floor, as most rooms in farmhouses are. As it was very warm, they opened the window and closed the shutters. A small lamp in bad taste, a present from the bride's father, was burning on the chest of drawers, and the bed stood ready to receive the young people, who did not stand upon all the ceremony which is usual among refined people.

The young woman had already taken off her wreath and her dress, and was in her petticoat, unlacing her boots, while Jean was finishing his cigar, and looking at her out of the corners of his eyes. It was an ardent look, more sensual than tender, for he felt more desire than love for her. Suddenly with a brusque movement, like a man who is going to set to work, he took off his coat. She had already taken off her boots, and was now pulling off her stockings; then she said to him: "Go and hide yourself behind the curtains while I get into bed."

He seemed as if he were going to refuse, but with a cunning look went and hid himself with the exception of his head. She laughed and tried to cover up his eyes, and they romped in an amorous and happy manner, without shame or embarrassment. At last he did as she asked him, and in a moment she unfastened her petticoat which slipped down her legs, fell at her feet and lay on the floor in a circle. She left it there, stepped over it, naked with the exception of her floating chemise, and slipped into the bed, whose springs creaked beneath her weight. He immediately went up to her, without his shoes and in his trousers, and stooping over his wife sought her lips, which she hid beneath the pillow,

when a shot was heard in the distance, in the direction of the forest of Râpées, as he thought.

He raised himself anxiously, and running to the window, with his heart beating, he opened the shutters. The full moon flooded the yard with yellow light, and the silhouettes of the apple-trees made black shadows at his feet, while in the distance the fields gleamed, covered with the ripe corn. But as he was leaning out, listening to every sound in the still night, two bare arms were put round his neck, and his wife whispered, trying to pull him back: "Do leave them alone; it has nothing to do with you. Come to bed."

He turned round, put his arms round her, and drew her toward him, feeling her warm skin through the thin material, and lifting her up in his vigorous arms, he carried her toward their couch, but just as he was laying her on the bed, which yielded beneath her weight, they heard another report, considerably nearer this time. Jean, giving way to his tumultuous rage, swore aloud: "Good God! Do you think I shall not go out and see what it is, because of you? Wait, wait a few minutes!" He put on his shoes again, took down his gun, which was always hanging within reach upon the wall, and, as his wife threw herself on her knees in her terror to implore him not to go, he hastily freed himself, ran to the window and jumped into the yard.

She waited one hour, two hours, until daybreak, but her husband did not return. Then she lost her head, aroused the house, related how angry Jean was, and said that he had gone after the poachers, and immediately all the male farm-servants, even the boys,

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went in search of their master. They found him two leagues from the farm, tied hand and foot, half dead with rage, his gun broken, his trousers turned inside out, three dead hares hanging round his neck, and a placard on his chest, with these words:

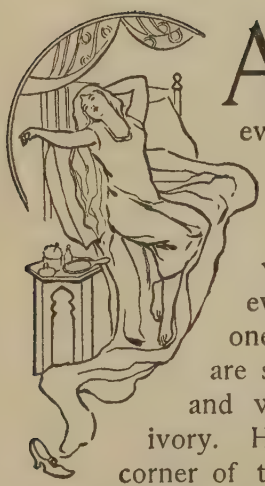
"Who goes on the chase, loses his place."

And later on when he used to tell this story of his wedding night, he generally added: "Ah! As far as a joke went, it was a good joke. They caught me in a snare, as if I had been a rabbit, the dirty brutes, and they shoved my head into a bag. But if I can only catch them some day, they had better look out for themselves!"

That is how they amuse themselves in Normandy, on a wedding day.

THE FATHER

I.



As he lived at Batignolles and was a clerk in the Public Education Office, he took the omnibus every morning to the center of Paris, sitting opposite a girl with whom he fell in love.

She went to the shop where she was employed at the same time every day. She was a little brunette, one of those dark girls whose eyes are so dark that they look like spots, and whose complexion has a look like ivory. He always saw her coming at the corner of the same street. She generally ran to catch the heavy vehicle, and would spring upon the steps before the horses had quite stopped. Then getting inside, rather out of breath, and sitting down, she would look round her.

The first time that he saw her, François Tessier felt that her face pleased him extremely. One sometimes meets a woman whom one longs to clasp madly in one's arms immediately, without even knowing her.

That girl answered to his inward desires, to his secret hopes, to that sort of ideal of love which one cherishes in the depths of the heart, without knowing it.

He looked at her intently, in spite of himself, and she grew embarrassed at his looks and blushed. He saw it and tried to turn away his eyes; but he involuntarily fixed them upon her again every moment, although he tried to look in another direction, and in a few days they knew each other without having spoken. He gave up his place to her when the omnibus was full, and got outside, though he was very sorry to do it. By this time she had gone so far as to greet him with a little smile; and although she always dropped her eyes under his looks. which she felt were too ardent, yet she did not appear offended at being looked at in such a manner.

They ended by speaking. A kind of rapid intimacy had become established between them, a daily intimacy of half an hour, which was certainly one of the most charming half hours in his life to him. He thought of her all the rest of the time, saw her continually during the long office hours, for he was haunted and bewitched by that floating and yet tenacious recollection which the image of a beloved woman leaves in us, and it seemed to him that the entire possession of that little person would be maddening happiness to him, almost above human realization.

Every morning now she shook hands with him, and he preserved the feeling of that touch, and the recollection of the gentle pressure of her little fingers, until the next day. He almost fancied that he preserved the imprint of it on his skin, and he anxiously

waited for this short omnibus ride all the rest of the time, while Sundays seemed to him heartbreaking days. However, there was no doubt that she loved him, for one Saturday in spring, she promised to go and lunch with him at Maison-Lafitte the next day.

II.

She was at the railway station first, which surprised him, but she said: "Before going, I want to speak to you. We have twenty minutes, and that is more than I shall take for what I have to say."

She trembled as she hung on his arm, and looked down, while her cheeks were pale, but she continued: "I do not want you to be deceived in me, and I shall not go there with you unless you promise, unless you swear—not to do—not to do anything that is at all improper—"

She had suddenly become as red as a poppy, and said no more. He did not know what to reply, for he was happy and disappointed at the same time. At the bottom of his heart, he perhaps preferred that it should be so, and yet—during the night he had indulged in anticipations that sent the hot blood flowing through his veins. He should love her less, certainly, if he knew that her conduct was light, but then it would be so charming, so delicious for him! And he made all a man's usual selfish calculations in love affairs.

As he did not say anything she began to speak again in an agitated voice, and with tears in her

eyes: "If you do not promise to respect me altogether, I shall return home."

And so he squeezed her arm tenderly and replied: "I promise, you shall only do what you like." She appeared relieved in mind, and asked with a smile: "Do you really mean it?"

And he looked into her eyes and replied. "I swear it."

"Now you may take the tickets," she said.

During the journey they could hardly speak, as the carriage was full, and when they got to Maison-Lafitte they went toward the Seine. The sun, which shone full upon the river, upon the leaves, and upon the turf, seemed to reflect in them his brightness, and they went, hand in hand, along the bank, looking at the shoals of little fish swimming near the bank, brimming over with happiness, as if they were raised from earth in their lightness of heart.

At last she said: "How foolish you must think me!"

"Why?" he asked.

"To come out like this, all alone with you."

"Certainly not; it is quite natural."

"No, no, it is not natural for me—because I do not wish to commit a fault. and yet this is how girls fall. But if you only knew how wretched it is, every day the same thing, every day in the month, and every month in the year. I live quite alone with mamma, and as she has had a great deal of trouble, she is not very cheerful. I do the best I can and try to laugh in spite of everything, but I do not always succeed. But all the same, it was wrong in me to come, though you, at any rate, will not be sorry."

By way of an answer he kissed her ardently on the ear that was nearest him, but she started away from him with an abrupt movement, and getting suddenly angry exclaimed: "Oh! Monsieur François, after what you swore to me!" And they went back to Maison-Lafitte.

They had lunch at the Petit-Havre, a low house, buried under four enormous poplar trees, by the side of the river. The air, the heat, the small bottle of white wine, and the sensation of being so close together, made them red and silent, with a feeling of oppression, but after the coffee they regained their high spirits, and having crossed the Seine, started off along the bank toward the village of La Frette. Suddenly he asked: "What is your name?"

"Louise."

"Louise," he repeated, and said nothing more.

The river, which described a long curve, bathed a row of white houses in the distance, which were reflected in the water. The girl picked the daisies and made them into a great bunch, while he sang vigorously, as intoxicated as a colt that has been turned into a meadow. On their left, a vine-covered slope followed the river. Suddenly François stopped motionless with astonishment: "Oh! look there!" he said.

The vines had come to an end, and the whole slope was covered with lilac bushes in flower. It was a violet-colored wood! A kind of great carpet stretched over the earth, reaching as far as the village, more than two miles off. She also stood surprised and delighted, and murmured: "Oh! how pretty!" And crossing a meadow they walked toward

that curious low hill, which every year furnishes all the lilac which is sold through Paris on the carts of the flower-peddlers.

A narrow path went beneath the trees, so they took it, and when they came to a small clearing, they sat down.

Swarms of flies were buzzing around them, and making a continuous, gentle sound, and the sun, the bright sun of a perfectly still day, shone over the bright slopes, and from that wood of flowers a powerful aroma was borne toward them, a wave of perfume, the breath of the flowers.

A church clock struck in the distance. They embraced gently, then clasped each other close, lying on the grass, without the knowledge of anything except of that kiss. She had closed her eyes and held him in her arms, pressing him to her closely, without a thought, with her reason bewildered, and from head to foot in passionate expectation. And she surrendered herself altogether without knowing that she had given herself to him. But she soon came to herself with the feeling of a great misfortune, and she began to cry and sob with grief, with her face buried in her hands.

He tried to console her, but she wanted to start, to return and go home immediately, and she kept saying as she walked along quickly: "Good heavens! good heavens!"

He said to her: "Louise! Louise! Please let us stop here." But now her cheeks were red and her eyes hollow, and as soon as they got to the railway station in Paris, she left him, without even saying good-bye.

III.

When he met her in the omnibus next day, she appeared to him to be changed and thinner, and she said to him: "I want to speak to you; we will get down at the Boulevard."

As soon as they were on the pavement, she said: "We must bid each other good-bye; I cannot meet you again after what has happened."

"But why?" he asked.

"Because I cannot; I have been culpable, and I will not be so again."

Then he implored her, tortured by desire, maddened by the wish of having her entirely, in the absolute freedom of nights of love, but she replied firmly: "No, I cannot, I cannot."

He, however, only grew all the more excited, and promised to marry her, but she said: "No," and left him.

For over a week he did not see her. He could not manage to meet her, and as he did not know her address, he thought he had lost her altogether. On the ninth day, however, there was a ring at his bell, and when he opened it, she was there. She threw herself into his arms, and did not resist any longer, and for three months she was his mistress. He was beginning to grow tired of her, when she told him a woman's most precious secret, and then he had one idea and wish—to break with her at any price. As, however, he could not do that, not knowing how to begin or what to say, full of anxiety, he

took a decisive step. One night he changed his lodgings, and disappeared.

The blow was so heavy that she did not look for the man who had abandoned her, but threw herself at her mother's knees, confessed her misfortune, and some months after gave birth to a boy.

IV.

Years passed, and François Tessier grew old, without there having been any alteration in his life. He led the dull, monotonous life of bureaucrats, without hopes and without expectations. Every day he got up at the same time, went through the same streets, went through the same door, past the same porter, went into the same office, sat in the same chair, and did the same work. He was alone in the world, alone, during the day, in the midst of his different colleagues, and alone at night in his bachelor's lodgings, and he laid by a hundred francs a month, against old age.

Every Sunday he went to the Champs-Elysées to watch the elegant people, the carriages, and the pretty women, and the next day he used to say to one of his colleagues: "The return of the carriages from the Bois de Boulogne was very brilliant yesterday." One fine Sunday morning, however, he went into the Parc Monceau where the mothers and nurses, sitting on the sides of the walks, watched the children playing, and suddenly François Tessier started. A woman passed by, holding two children by the hand: a little boy of about ten and a little girl of four. It was she.

He walked another hundred yards, and then fell into a chair, choking with emotion. She had not recognized him, and so he came back, wishing to see her again. She was sitting down now and the boy was standing by her side very quietly, while the little girl was making sand castles. It was she, it was certainly she, but she had the serious looks of a lady, was dressed simply, and looked self-possessed and dignified. He looked at her from a distance, for he did not venture to go near, but the little boy raised his head, and François Tessier felt himself tremble. It was his own son, there could be no doubt of that. And as he looked at him, he thought he could recognize himself as he appeared in an old photograph taken years ago. He remained hidden behind a tree, waiting for her to go, that he might follow her.

He did not sleep that night. The idea of the child especially harassed him. His son! Oh! If he could only have known, have been sure? But what could he have done? However, he went to the house where she had once lived and asked about her. He was told that a neighbor, an honorable man of strict morals had been touched by her distress and had married her; he knew the fault she had committed and had married her, and had even recognized the child, his, François Tessier's child, as his own.

He returned to the Parc Monceau every Sunday, for then he always saw her, and each time he was seized with a mad, an irresistible longing to take his son into his arms, cover him with kisses and to steal him, to carry him off.

He suffered horribly in his wretched isolation as an old bachelor, with nobody to care for him, and he

also suffered atrocious mental torture, torn by paternal tenderness springing from remorse, longing, and jealousy, and from that need of loving one's own children which nature has implanted in all. And so at last he determined to make a despairing attempt, and going up to her, as she entered the park, he said, standing in the middle of the path, pale and with trembling lips: "You do not recognize me." She raised her eyes, looked at him, uttered an exclamation of horror, of terror, and taking the two children by the hand she rushed away, dragging them after her, while he went home and wept, inconsolably.

Months passed without his seeing her again. He suffered, day and night, for he was a prey to his paternal love. He would gladly have died, if he could only have kissed his son; he would have committed murder, performed any task, braved any danger, ventured anything. He wrote to her, but she did not reply, and after writing her some twenty letters he saw that there was no hope of altering her determination. Then he formed the desperate resolution of writing to her husband, being quite prepared to receive a bullet from a revolver, if need be. His letter only consisted of a few lines, as follows:

"MONSIEUR:

"You must have a perfect horror of my name, but I am so miserable, so overcome by misery, that my only hope is in you, and therefore I venture to request you to grant me an interview of only five minutes.

"I have the honor, etc."

The next day he received the reply:

"MONSIEUR:

"I shall expect you to-morrow, Tuesday, at five o'clock."

V.

As he went up the staircase, François Tessier's heart beat so violently that he had to stop several times. There was a dull and violent noise in his breast, the noise as of some animal galloping; he could only breathe with difficulty, and had to hold on to the banisters in order not to fall.

He rang the bell on the third floor, and when a maidservant had opened the door, he asked: "Does Monsieur Flamel live here?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Kindly come in."

He was shown into the drawing-room; he was alone and waited, feeling bewildered, as in the midst of a catastrophe, until a door opened and a man came in. He was tall, serious, and rather stout, he wore a black frock-coat, and pointed to a chair with his hand. François Tessier sat down, and said, panting: "Monsieur — Monsieur — I do not know whether you know my name — whether you know —"

Monsieur Flamel interrupted him: "You need not tell it me, Monsieur, I know it. My wife has spoken to me about you."

He spoke it in the dignified tone of voice of a good man who wishes to be severe, — with the commonplace stateliness of an honorable man, and François Tessier continued: "Well, Monsieur, I want to say this. I am dying of grief, of remorse, of shame, and I would like once, only once, to kiss the child."

Monsieur Flamel rose and rang the bell, and when the servant came in, he said: "Will you bring Louis here?" When she had gone out, they remained face

to face, without speaking, having nothing more to say to one another, and waited. Then, suddenly, a little boy of ten rushed into the room, and ran up to the man whom he believed to be his father, but he stopped when he saw a stranger, and Monsieur Flamel kissed him and said: "Now go and kiss that gentleman, my dear." And the child went up to Tessier nicely, and looked at him.

François Tessier had risen, he let his hat fall and was ready to fall himself as he looked at his son, while Monsieur Flamel had turned away, from a feeling of delicacy, and was looking out of the window.

The child waited in surprise, but he picked up the hat and gave it to the stranger. Then François, taking the child up in his arms, began to kiss him wildly all over his face, on his eyes, his cheeks, on his mouth, on his hair, and the youngster, frightened at the shower of kisses tried to avoid them, turned away his head and pushed away the man's face with his little hands. But suddenly, François Tessier put him down, cried: "Good-bye! Good-bye!" and rushed out of the room as if he had been a thief.

THE ARTIST

"BAH! Monsieur," the old mountebank said to me; "it is a matter of exercise and habit, that is all! Of course, one requires to be a little gifted that way and not to be butter-fingered, but what is chiefly necessary is patience and daily practice for long, long years."

His modesty surprised me all the more, because of all performers who are generally infatuated with their own skill, he was the most wonderfully clever one I had met. Certainly I had frequently seen him, for everybody had seen him in some circus or other, or even in traveling shows, performing the trick that consists of putting a man or woman with extended arms against a wooden target, and in throwing knives between their fingers and round their heads, from a distance. There is nothing very extraordinary in it, after all, when one knows *the tricks of the trade*, and that the knives are not the least sharp, and stick into the wood at some distance from

the flesh. It is the rapidity of the throws, the glitter of the blades, and the curve which the handles make toward their living object, which give an air of danger to an exhibition that has become commonplace, and only requires very middling skill.

But here there was no trick and no deception, and no dust thrown into the eyes. It was done in good earnest and in all sincerity. The knives were as sharp as razors, and the old mountebank planted them close to the flesh, exactly in the angle between the fingers. He surrounded the head with a perfect halo of knives, and the neck with a collar from which nobody could have extricated himself without cutting his carotid artery, while, to increase the difficulty, the old fellow went through the performance without seeing, his whole face being covered with a close mask of thick oilcloth.

Naturally, like other great artists, he was not understood by the crowd, who confounded him with vulgar tricksters, and his mask only appeared to them a trick the more, and a very common trick into the bargain.

"He must think us very stupid," they said. "How could he possibly aim without having his eyes open?"

And they thought there must be imperceptible holes in the oilcloth, a sort of latticework concealed in the material. It was useless for him to allow the public to examine the mask for themselves before the exhibition began. It was all very well that they could not discover any trick, but they were only all the more convinced that they were being tricked. Did not the people know that they ought to be tricked?

I had recognized a great artist in the old mountebank, and I was quite sure that he was altogether incapable of any trickery. I told him so, while expressing my admiration to him; and he had been touched by my open admiration and above all by the justice I had done him. Thus we became good friends, and he explained to me, very modestly, the real trick which the crowd do not understand, the eternal trick contained in these simple words: "To be gifted by nature and to practice every day for long, long years."

He had been especially struck by the certainty which I expressed that any trickery must become impossible to him. "Yes," he said to me; "quite impossible! Impossible to a degree which you cannot imagine. If I were to tell you! But where would be the use?"

His face clouded over, and his eyes filled with tears. I did not venture to force myself into his confidence. My looks, however, were not so discreet as my silence, and begged him to speak; so he responded to their mute appeal.

"After all," he said; "why should I not tell you about it? You will understand me." And he added, with a look of sudden ferocity: "She understood it, at any rate!"

"Who?" I asked.

"My strumpet of a wife," he replied. "Ah! Monsieur, what an abominable creature she was—if you only knew! Yes, she understood it too well, too well, and that is why I hate her so; even more on that account, than for having deceived me. For that is a natural fault, is it not, and may be pardoned? But the other thing was a crime, a horrible crime."

The woman, who stood against the wooden target every night with her arms stretched out and her finger extended, and whom the old mountebank fitted with gloves and with a halo formed of his knives, which were as sharp as razors and which he planted close to her, was his wife. She might have been a woman of forty, and must have been fairly pretty, but with a perverse prettiness; she had an impudent mouth, a mouth that was at the same time sensual and bad, with the lower lip too thick for the thin, dry upper lip.

I had several times noticed that every time he planted a knife in the board, she uttered a laugh, so low as scarcely to be heard, but which was very significant when one heard it, for it was a hard and very mocking laugh. I had always attributed that sort of reply to an artifice which the occasion required. It was intended, I thought, to accentuate the danger she incurred and the contempt that she felt for it, thanks to the sureness of the thrower's hands, and so I was very much surprised when the mountebank said to me:

"Have you observed her laugh, I say? Her evil laugh which makes fun of me, and her cowardly laugh which defies me? Yes, cowardly, because she knows that nothing can happen to her, nothing, in spite of all she deserves, in spite of all that I ought to do to her, in spite of all that I *want* to do to her."

"What do you want to do?"

"Confound it! Cannot you guess? I want to kill her."

"To kill her, because she has—"

"Because she has deceived me? No, no, not that, I tell you again. I have forgiven her for that a long time ago, and I am too much accustomed to it! But the worst of it is that the first time I forgave her, when I told her that all the same I might some day have my revenge by cutting her throat, if I chose, without seeming to do it on purpose, as if it were an accident, mere awkwardness—"

"Oh! So you said that to her?"

"Of course I did, and I meant it. I thought I might be able to do it, for you see I had the perfect right to do so. It was so simple, so easy, so tempting! Just think! A mistake of less than half an inch, and her skin would be cut at the neck where the jugular vein is, and the jugular would be severed. My knives cut very well! And when once the jugular is cut—good-bye. The blood would spurt out, and one, two, three red jets, and all would be over; she would be dead, and I should have had my revenge!"

"That is true, certainly, horribly true!"

"And without any risk to me, eh? An accident, that is all; bad luck, one of those mistakes which happen every day in our business. What could they accuse me of? Whoever would think of accusing me, even? Homicide through imprudence, that would be all! They would even pity me, rather than accuse me. 'My wife! My poor wife!' I should say, sobbing. 'My wife, who is so necessary to me, who is half the breadwinner, who takes part in my performance!' You must acknowledge that I should be pitied!"

"Certainly; there is not the least doubt about that."

"And you must allow that such a revenge would be a very nice revenge, the best possible revenge which I could have with assured impunity."

"Evidently that is so."

"Very well! But when I told her so, as I have told you, and more forcibly still; threatening her, as I was mad with rage and ready to do the deed that I had dreamed of on the spot, what do you think she said?"

"That you were a good fellow, and would certainly not have the atrocious courage to—"

"Tut! tut! tut! I am not such a good fellow as you think. I am not frightened of blood, and that I have proved already, though it would be useless to tell you how and where. But I had no necessity to prove it to her, for she knows that I am capable of a good many things; even of crime; especially of one crime."

"And she was not frightened?"

"No. She merely replied that I could not do what I said; you understand. That I could not do it!"

"Why not?"

"Ah! Monsieur, so you do not understand? Why do you not? Have I not explained to you by what constant, long, daily practice I have learned to plant my knives without seeing what I am doing?"

"Yes, well, what then?"

"Well! Cannot you understand what she has understood with such terrible results, that now my hand would no longer obey me if I wished to make a mistake as I threw?"

"Is it possible?"

"Nothing is truer, I am sorry to say. For I really have wished to have the revenge which I have dreamed of, and which I thought so easy. Exasperated by that bad woman's insolence and confidence in her own safety, I have several times made up my mind to kill her, and have exerted all my energy and all my skill to make my knives fly aside when I threw them to make a border round her neck. I have tried with all my might to make them deviate half an inch, just enough to cut her throat. I wanted to, and I have never succeeded, never. And always the slut's horrible laugh makes fun of me, always, always."

And with a deluge of tears, with something like a roar of unsatiated and muzzled rage, he ground his teeth as he wound up: "She knows me, the jade; she is in the secret of my work, of my patience, of my trick, routine, whatever you may call it! She lives in my innermost being, and sees into it more closely than you do, or than I do myself. She knows what a faultless machine I have become, the machine of which she makes fun, the machine which is too well wound up, the machine which cannot get out of order—and she knows that I *cannot* make a mistake."

FALSE ALARM

"I HAVE a perfect horror of pianos," said Frémecourt, "of those hateful boxes which fill up a drawing-room, and have not even the soft sound and the queer shape of the mahogany or veneered spinets, to which our grandmothers sighed out exquisite, long-forgotten ballads, allowing their fingers to run over the keys, while around them there floated a delicate odor of powder and muslin, and some little Abbé or other turned over the leaves, continually making mistakes as he looked at the patches close to the lips on the white skin of the player instead of at the music.

"I wish there were a tax upon them, or that some evening during a riot, the people would make huge bonfires of them, which would illuminate the whole town. They simply exasperate me, and affect my nerves, and make me think of the tortures those poor girls must suffer, who are condemned not to stir for hours, but to keep on constantly strumming away at the chromatic scales and monotonous arpeggios, and

to have no other object in life except to win a prize at the Conservatoire.

"Their incoherent music suggests to me the sufferings of those who are ill, abandoned, wounded. It proceeds from every floor of every house, it irritates you, nearly drives you mad, and makes you break out into ironical fits of laughter.

"And yet when that madcap Lâlie Spring honored me with her love—I never can refuse anything to a woman who smells of rare perfume, and who has a large store of promises in her looks, and who puts out her red, smiling lips immediately, as if she were going to offer you handsel money—I bought a piano, so that she might strum upon it to her heart's content. I got it, however, on the hire-purchase system, and paid so much a month, as *grisettes** do for their furniture.

"At that time I had the apartments I had so long dreamed of: warm, elegant, light, well-arranged, with two entrances, and an incomparable porter's wife, who had been canteen-keeper in a Zouave regiment, and knew everything and understood everything at a wink.

"It was the kind of apartment from which a woman has not the courage to escape, so as to avoid temptation, where she becomes weak, and rolls herself up on the soft, eider-down cushions like a cat, where she is appeased, and in spite of herself, thinks of love at the sight of the low, wide couch, so suitable for caresses, rooms with heavy curtains, which

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*Work-girl, a name applied to those whose virtue is not too rigorous.

quite deaden the sound of voices and of laughter, and filled with flowers that scent the air, whose smell lingers on the folds of the hangings.

"They were rooms in which a woman forgets time, where she begins by accepting a cup of tea and nibbling a sweet cake, and abandons her fingers timidly and with regret to other fingers which tremble, and are hot, and so by degrees loses her head and succumbs.

"I do not know whether the piano brought us ill luck, but Lâlie had not even time to learn four songs before she disappeared like the wind, just as she had come—*flick-flack*, good-night, good-bye. Perhaps it was from spite, because she had found letters from other women on my table; perhaps to change her companion, as she was not one of those to hang on to one man and become a fixture.

"I had not been in love with her, certainly, but yet such breakings have always some effect on a man. Some string breaks when a woman leaves you, and you think that you must start all over again, and take another chance in that forbidden sport in which one risks so much, the sport that one has been through a hundred times before, and which leaves you nothing to show in the end.

"Nothing is more unpleasant than to lend your apartments to a friend, to realize that some one is going to disturb the mysterious intimacy which really exists between the actual owner and his furniture, and violate the soul of those past kisses which float in the air; that the room whose tints you connect with some recollection, some dream, some sweet vision, and whose colors you have tried to make

harmonize with certain fair-haired, pink-skinned girls, is going to become a commonplace lodging, like the rooms in an ordinary lodging house, fit only for hidden crime and for evanescent love affairs.

"However, poor Stanis had begged me so urgently to do him that service; he was so very much in love with Madame de Fréjus. Among the characters in this comedy there was a brute of a husband who was terribly jealous and suspicious; one of those Othellos who have always a flea in their ear, and come back unexpectedly from shooting or the club, who pick up pieces of torn paper, listen at doors, smell out meetings with the nose of a detective, and seem to have been sent into the world only to be cuckolds, but who know better than most how to lay a snare, and to play a nasty trick. So when I went to Venice, I consented to let him have my rooms.

"I will leave you to guess whether they made up for lost time, although, after all, it is no business of yours. My journey, however, which was only to have lasted a few weeks,—just long enough for me to benefit by the change of air, to rid my brain of the image of my last mistress, and perhaps to find another, among that strange mixture of society which one meets there, a medley of American, Slav, Viennese, and Italian women, who instill a little artificial life into that old city, asleep amid the melancholy silence of the lagoons,—was prolonged, and Stanis was as much at home in my rooms as he was in his own.

"Madame Piquignolles, the retired canteen-keeper, took great interest in this adventure, watched over

their little love affair, and, as she used to say, was on guard as soon as they arrived one after the other, the marchioness covered with a thick veil, and slipping in as quickly as possible, always uneasy, and afraid that Monsieur de Fréjus might be following her, and Stanis with the assured and satisfied look of an amorous husband, who is going to meet his little wife after having been away from home for a few days.

"Well, one day during one of those delicious moments when his beloved one, fresh from her bath, and invigorated by the coolness of the water, was pressing close to her lover, reclining in his arms, and smiling at him with half-closed eyes, during one of those moments when people do not speak, but continue their dream, the sentinel, without even asking leave, suddenly burst into the room, for worthy Madame Piquignolles was in a terrible fright.

"A few minutes before, a well-dressed gentleman, followed by two others of seedy appearance, but who looked very strong, and fit to knock anybody down, had questioned and cross-questioned her in a rough manner, and tried to turn her inside out, as she said, asking her whether Monsieur de Frémecourt lived on the first floor, without giving her any explanation. When she declared that there was nobody occupying the apartments then, as her lodger was not in France, Monsieur de Fréjus—for it could certainly be nobody but he—had burst out into an evil laugh, and said: 'Very well; I shall go and fetch the Police Commissary of the district, and he will make you let us in!'

"And as quickly as possible, while she was telling her story, now in a low, and then in a shrill

voice, the woman picked up the marchioness's dress, cloak, lace-edged drawers, silk petticoat, and little varnished shoes, pulled her out of bed, without giving her time to let her know what she was doing, or to moan, or to have a fit of hysterics, and carried her off, as if she had been a doll, with all her pretty toggery, to a large, empty cupboard in the dining-room, that was concealed by Flemish tapestry. 'You are a man. Try to get out of the mess,' she said to Stanis as she shut the door; 'I will be answerable for Madame.' And the enormous woman, who was out of breath by hurrying upstairs as she had done, and whose kind, large, red face was dripping with perspiration, while her ample bosom shook beneath her loose jacket, took Madame de Fréjus on to her knees as if she had been a baby, whose nurse was trying to quiet her.

"She felt the poor little culprit's heart beating as if it were going to burst, while shivers ran over her skin, which was so soft and delicate that the porter's wife was afraid that she might hurt it with her coarse hands. She was struck with wonder at the cambric chemise, which a gust of wind would have carried off as if it had been a pigeon's feather, and by the delicate odor of that scarce flower which filled the narrow cupboard, and which rose up in the darkness from that supple body, which was impregnated with the warmth of the bed.

"She would have liked to be there, in that profaned room, and to tell them in a loud voice—with her hands upon her hips as at the time when she used to serve brandy to her comrades at Daddy l'Arbi's—that they had no common sense, that they

were none of them good for much, neither the Police Commissary, the husband nor the subordinates, to come and torment a pretty young thing, who was having a little bit of fun, like that. It was a nice job, to get over the wall in that way, to be absent from the second call of names, especially when they were all of the same sort, and were glad of fiv francs an hour! She had certainly done quite right to get out sometimes and to have a sweetheart, and she was a charming little thing, and that she would say, if she were called before the Court as a witness!

"And she took Madame de Fréjus in her arms to quiet her, and repeated the same thing a dozen times, whispered pretty things to her, and interrupted her occasionally to listen whether they were not searching all the nooks and corners of the apartment. 'Come, come,' she said; 'do not distress yourself. Be calm, my dear. It hurts me to hear you cry like that. There will be no mischief done, I will vouch for it.'

"The marchioness, who was nearly fainting and who was prostrate with terror, could only sob out: 'Good heavens! Good heavens!'

"She scarcely seemed to be conscious of anything; her head seemed vacant, her ears buzzed, and she felt benumbed, like one who goes to sleep in the snow.

"Oh! Only to forget everything, as her love dream was over, to go out quickly like those little rose-colored tapers at Nice, on Shrove Tuesday evening.

"Oh! Not to awake any more, as the to-morrow would come in black and sad, because a whole array

of barristers, ushers, solicitors, and judges would be against her, and disturb her usual quietude, would torment her, cover her with mud, as her delicious, amorous adventure—her first—which had been so carefully enveloped in mystery, and had been kept so secret behind closed shutters and thick veils, would become an everyday episode of adultery which would get wind and be discussed from door to door. The lilac had faded, and she was obliged to bid farewell to happiness, as if to an old friend who was going far, very far away, never to return!

"Suddenly, however, she started and sat up, with her neck stretched out and her eyes fixed, while the ex-canteen-keeper, who was trembling with emotion, put her hands to her left ear, which was her best, like a speaking trumpet, and tried to hear the cries which succeeded each other from room to room, amid a noise of opening and shutting of doors.

"'Ah! upon my word, I am not blind. It is Monsieur de Stanis who is looking for me, and making all that noise. Don't you hear: "M'ame Piquignolles, M'me Piquignolles!" Saved, saved!'

"And she dashed out of the cupboard like an unwieldy mass, with her cap all on one side, an anxious look and heavy legs.

"Stanis was still quite pale, and in a panting voice he cried out to them: 'Nothing serious, only that fool Frémecourt, who lent me the rooms, has forgotten to pay for his piano for the last five months, a hundred francs* a month. You understand; they came to claim it, and as we did not reply, why, they

*$20.

fetched the Police Commissary, and gained entrance in the name of the law.'

"'A nice fright to give one!' Madame Piquignolles said, throwing herself on to a chair. 'Confound the nasty piano!'

"It may be useless to add, that the marchioness has quite renounced *trifles*, as our forefathers used to say, and would deserve a prize for virtue, if the Academy would only show itself rather more gallant toward pretty women, who take crossroads in order to become virtuous.

"Emotions like that cure people of running risks of that kind!"

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

"THERE, my friend," I said to Labarbe, "you have just repeated those five words, 'That pig of a Morin.' Why on earth do I never hear Morin's name mentioned without his being called *a pig?*"

Labarbe, who is a Deputy, looked at me with eyes like an owl's, and said: "Do you mean to say that you do not know Morin's story, and yet come from La Rochelle?" I was obliged to declare that I did not know Morin's story, and then Labarbe rubbed his hands, and began his recital.

"You knew Morin, did you not, and you remember his large linen-draper's shop on the Quai de la Rochelle?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"All right, then. You must know that in 1862 or '63 Morin went to spend a fortnight in Paris for pleasure, or for his pleasures, but under the pretext of renewing his stock, and you also know what a fortnight in Paris means for a country shopkeeper; it

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makes his blood grow hot. The theater every evening, women's dresses rustling up against you, and continual excitement; one goes almost mad with it. One sees nothing but dancers in tights, actresses in very low dresses, round legs, fat shoulders, all nearly within reach of one's hands, without daring or being able to touch, and one scarcely ever tastes an inferior dish. And one leaves it, with heart still all in a flutter, and a mind still exhilarated by a sort of longing for kisses which tickle one's lips.

"Morin was in that state when he took his ticket for La Rochelle by the 8.40 night express. And he was walking up and down the waiting-room at the station, when he stopped suddenly in front of a young lady who was kissing an old one. She had her veil up, and Morin murmured with delight: 'By Jove, what a pretty woman!'

"When she had said 'Good-bye' to the old lady, she went into the waiting-room, and Morin followed her; then she went on to the platform and Morin still followed her; then she got into an empty carriage, and he again followed her. There were very few travelers by the express, the engine whistled, and the train started. They were alone. Morin devoured her with his eyes. She appeared to be about nineteen or twenty, and was fair, tall, and with demure looks. She wrapped a railway rug round her legs and stretched herself on the seat to sleep.

"Morin asked himself: 'I wonder who she is?' And a thousand conjectures, a thousand projects went through his head. He said to himself: 'So many adventures are told as happening on railway journeys, that this may be one that is going to present itself to

me. Who knows? A piece of good luck like that happens very quickly, and perhaps I need only be a little venturesome. Was it not Danton who said: "Audacity, more audacity, and always audacity." If it was not Danton it was Mirabeau, but that does not matter. But then, I have no audacity, and that is the difficulty. Oh! If one only knew, if one could only read people's minds! I will bet that every day one passes by magnificent opportunities without knowing it, though a gesture would be enough to let me know that she did not ask for anything better.'

"Then he imagined to himself combinations which led him to triumph. He pictured some chivalrous deed, or merely some slight service which he rendered her, a lively, gallant conversation which ended in a declaration, which ended in—in what you think.

"But he could find no opening; had no pretext, and he waited for some fortunate circumstance, with his heart ravaged, and his mind topsy-turvy. The night passed, and the pretty girl still slept, while Morin was meditating his own fall. The day broke and soon the first ray of sunlight appeared in the sky, a long, clear ray which shone on the face of the sleeping girl, and woke her, so she sat up, looked at the country, then at Morin and smiled. She smiled like a happy woman, with an engaging and bright look, and Morin trembled. Certainly that smile was intended for him, it was a discreet invitation, the signal which he was waiting for. That smile meant to say: 'How stupid, what a ninny, what a dolt, what a donkey you are, to have sat there on your seat like a post all night.

"'Just look at me, am I not charming? And you have sat like that for the whole night, when you have been alone with a pretty woman, you great simpleton!'

"She was still smiling as she looked at him, she even began to laugh; and he lost his head trying to find something suitable to say, no matter what. But he could think of nothing, nothing, and then, seized with a coward's courage, he said to himself: 'So much the worse, I will risk everything,' and suddenly, without the slightest warning, he went toward her, his arms extended, his lips protruding, and seizing her in his arms, kissed her.

"She sprang up with a bound, crying out: 'Help! help!' and screaming with terror; then she opened the carriage door, and waved her arm outside; then mad with terror she was trying to jump out, while Morin, who was almost distracted, and feeling sure that she would throw herself out, held her by her skirt and stammered: 'Oh! Madame! Oh! Madame!'

"The train slackened speed, and then stopped. Two guards rushed up at the young woman's frantic signals, and she threw herself into their arms, stammering: 'That man wanted — wanted — to — to —' And then she fainted.

"They were at Mauzé station, and the gendarme on duty arrested Morin. When the victim of his brutality had regained her consciousness, she made her charge against him, and the police drew it up. The poor linen-draper did not reach home till night, with a prosecution hanging over him for an outrage on morals in a public place.

II.

"At that time I was editor of the 'Fanal des Charentes,' and I used to meet Morin every day at the Café du Commerce. The day after his adventure he came to see me, as he did not know what to do. I did not hide my opinion from him, but said to him: 'You are no better than a pig. No decent man behaves like that.'

"He cried. His wife had given him a beating, and he foresaw his trade ruined, his name dragged through the mire and dishonored, his friends outraged and taking no more notice of him. In the end he excited my pity, and I sent for my colleague Rivet, a bantering, but very sensible little man, to give us his advice.

"He advised me to see the Public Prosecutor, who was a friend of mine, and so I sent Morin home, and went to call on the magistrate. He told me that the woman who had been insulted was a young lady, Mademoiselle Henriette Bonnel, who had just received her certificate as governess in Paris, and spent her holidays with her uncle and aunt, who were very respectable tradespeople in Mauzé, and what made Morin's case all the more serious was, that the uncle had lodged a complaint. But the public official had consented to let the matter drop if this complaint were withdrawn, so that we must try and get him to do this.

"I went back to Morin's and found him in bed, ill with excitement and distress. His wife, a tall, rawboned woman with a beard, was abusing him continually, and she showed me into the room, shouting

at me: 'So you have come to see that pig of a Morin. Well, there he is, the darling!' And she planted herself in front of the bed, with her hands on her hips. I told him how matters stood, and he begged me to go and see her uncle and aunt. It was a delicate mission, but I undertook it, and the poor devil never ceased repeating: 'I assure you I did not even kiss her, no, not even that. I will take my oath to it!'

"I replied: 'It is all the same; you are nothing but a pig.' And I took a thousand francs which he gave me, to employ them as I thought best, but as I did not care venturing to her uncle's house alone, I begged Rivet to go with me, which he agreed to do, on the condition that we went immediately, for he had some urgent business at La Rochelle that afternoon. So two hours later we rang at the door of a nice countryhouse. A pretty girl came and opened the door to us, who was assuredly the young lady in question, and I said to Rivet in a low voice: 'Confound it! I begin to understand Morin!'

"The uncle, Monsieur Tonnelet subscribed to 'The Fanal,' and was a fervent political co-religionist of ours. He received us with open arms, and congratulated us and wished us joy; he was delighted at having the two editors in his house, and Rivet whispered to me: 'I think we shall be able to arrange the matter of that pig of a Morin for him.'

"The niece had left the room, and I introduced the delicate subject. I waved the specter of scandal before his eyes; I accentuated the inevitable depreciation which the young lady would suffer if such an affair got known, for nobody would believe in a

simple kiss. The good man seemed undecided, but could not make up his mind about anything without his wife, who would not be in until late that evening. But suddenly he uttered an exclamation of triumph: 'Look here, I have an excellent idea. I will keep you here to dine and sleep, and when my wife comes home, I hope we shall be able to arrange matters.'

"Rivet resisted at first, but the wish to extricate that pig of a Morin decided him, and we accepted the invitation. So the uncle got up radiant, called his niece, and proposed that we should take a stroll in his grounds, saying: 'We will leave serious matters until the morning.' Rivet and he began to talk politics, while I soon found myself lagging a little behind with the girl, who was really charming! charming! and with the greatest precaution I began to speak to her about her adventure, and try to make her my ally. She did not, however, appear the least confused, and listened to me like a person who was enjoying the whole thing very much.

"I said to her: 'Just think, Mademoiselle, how unpleasant it will be for you. You will have to appear in court, to encounter malicious looks, to speak before everybody, and to recount that unfortunate occurrence in the railway-carriage, in public. Do you not think, between ourselves, that it would have been much better for you to have put that dirty scoundrel back into his place without calling for assistance, and merely to have changed your carriage?' She began to laugh, and replied: 'What you say is quite true! but what could I do? I was frightened, and when one is frightened, one does not stop to

reason with oneself. As soon as I realized the situation, I was very sorry that I had called out, but then it was too late. You must also remember that the idiot threw himself upon me like a madman, without saying a word and looking like a lunatic. I did not even know what he wanted of me.'

"She looked me full in the face, without being nervous or intimidated, and I said to myself: 'She is a funny sort of girl, that: I can quite see how that pig Morin came to make a mistake,' and I went on, jokingly: 'Come, Mademoiselle, confess that he was excusable, for after all, a man cannot find himself opposite such a pretty girl as you are, without feeling a legitimate desire to kiss her.'

"She laughed more than ever, and showed her teeth, and said: 'Between the desire and the act, Monsieur, there is room for respect.' It was a funny expression to use, although it was not very clear, and I asked abruptly: 'Well now, supposing I were to kiss you now, what would you do?' She stopped to look at me from head to foot, and then said calmly: 'Oh! you? That is quite another matter.'

"I knew perfectly well, by Jove, that it was not the same thing at all, as everybody in the neighborhood called me 'Handsome Labarbe.' I was thirty years old in those days, but I asked her: 'And why, pray?'

"She shrugged her shoulders, and replied: 'Well! because you are not so stupid as he is.' And then she added, looking at me slyly: 'Nor so ugly, either.'

"Before she could make a movement to avoid me, I had implanted a hearty kiss on her cheek. She

sprang aside, but it was too late, and then she said: 'Well, you are not very bashful, either! But don't do that sort of thing again.'

"I put on a humble look and said in a low voice: 'Oh! Mademoiselle, as for me, if I long for one thing more than another, it is to be summoned before a magistrate on the same charge as Morin.'

"'Why?' she asked.

"Looking steadily at her, I replied: 'Because you are one of the most beautiful creatures living; because it would be an honor and a glory for me to have offered you violence, and because people would have said, after seeing you: "Well, Labarbe has richly deserved what he has got, but he is a lucky fellow, all the same."'

"She began to laugh heartily again, and said: 'How funny you are!' And she had not finished the word *funny*, before I had her in my arms and was kissing her ardently wherever I could find a place, on her forehead, on her eyes, on her lips occasionally, on her cheeks, in fact, all over her head, some part of which she was obliged to leave exposed, in spite of herself, in order to defend the others. At last she managed to release herself, blushing and angry. 'You are very unmannerly, Monsieur,' she said, 'and I am sorry I listened to you.'

"I took her hand in some confusion, and stammered out: 'I beg your pardon—I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle. I have offended you; I have acted like a brute! Do not be angry with me for what I have done. If you knew—'

"I vainly sought for some excuse, and in a few moments she said: 'There is nothing for me to

know, Monsieur.' But I had found something to say, and I cried: 'Mademoiselle, I love you!'

"She was really surprised, and raised her eyes to look at me, and I went on: 'Yes, Mademoiselle, and pray listen to me. I do not know Morin, and I do not care anything about him. It does not matter to me the least if he is committed for trial and locked up meanwhile. I saw you here last year, and I was so taken with you, that the thought of you has never left me since, and it does not matter to me whether you believe me or not. I thought you adorable, and the remembrance of you took such a hold on me that I longed to see you again, and so I made use of that fool Morin as a pretext, and here I am. Circumstances have made me exceed the due limits of respect, and I can only beg you to pardon me.'

"She read the truth in my looks, and was ready to smile again; then she murmured: 'You humbug!' But I raised my hand, and said in a sincere voice (and I really believe that I was sincere): 'I swear to you that I am speaking the truth.' She replied quite simply: 'Really?'

"We were alone, quite alone, as Rivet and her uncle had disappeared in a side walk, and I made her a real declaration of love, while I squeezed and kissed her hands, and she listened to it as to something new and agreeable, without exactly knowing how much of it she was to believe, while in the end I felt agitated, and at last really myself believed what I said. I was pale, anxious, and trembling, and I gently put my arm round her waist, and spoke to her softly, whispering into the little curls over her ears. She seemed dead, so absorbed in thought was she.

"Then her hand touched mine, and she pressed it, and I gently circled her waist with a trembling, and gradually a firmer, grasp. She did not move now, and I touched her cheeks with my lips, and suddenly, without seeking them, mine met hers. It was a long, long kiss, and it would have lasted longer still, if I had not heard a *Hum! Hum!* just behind me. She made her escape through the bushes, and I turning round saw Rivet coming toward me, and walking in the middle of the path. He said without even smiling: 'So that is the way in which you settle the affair of that pig Morin.'

"I replied, conceitedly: 'One does what one can, my dear fellow. But what about the uncle? How have you got on with him? I will answer for the niece.'

"'I have not been so fortunate with him,' he replied. Whereupon I took his arm, and we went indoors.

III.

"Dinner made me lose my head altogether. I sat beside her, and my hand continually met hers under the tablecloth, my foot touched hers, and our looks encountered each other.

"After dinner we took a walk by moonlight, and I whispered all the tender things I could think of to her. I held her close to me, kissed her every moment, moistening my lips against hers, while her uncle and Rivet were disputing as they walked in front of us. We went in, and soon a messenger

brought a telegram from her aunt, saying that she would return by the first train the next morning, at seven o'clock.

"'Very well, Henriette,' her uncle said, 'go and show the gentlemen their rooms.' She showed Rivet his first, and he whispered to me: 'There was no danger of her taking us into yours first.' Then she took me to my room, and as soon as she was alone with me, I took her in my arms again and tried to excite her senses and overcome her resistance, but when she felt that she was near succumbing, she escaped out of the room, and I got between the sheets, very much put out and excited and feeling rather foolish, for I knew that I should not sleep much. I was wondering how I could have committed such a mistake, when there was a gentle knock at my door, and on my asking who was there, a low voice replied: 'I.'

"I dressed myself quickly and opened the door, and she came in. 'I forgot to ask you what you take in the morning,' she said, 'chocolate, tea, or coffee?' I put my arms around her impetuously and said, devouring her with kisses: 'I will take—I will take—' But she freed herself from my arms, blew out my candle, and disappeared, and left me alone in the dark, furious, trying to find some matches and not able to do so. At last I got some and I went into the passage, feeling half mad, with my candlestick in my hand.

"What was I going to do? I did not stop to reason, I only wanted to find her, and I would. I went a few steps without reflecting, but then I suddenly thought to myself: 'Suppose I should

go into the uncle's room, what should I say?' And I stood still, with my head a void, and my heart beating.

"But in a few moments, I thought of an answer: 'Of course, I shall say that I was looking for Rivet's room, to speak to him about an important matter,' and I began to inspect all the doors, trying to find hers, and at last I took hold of a handle at a venture, turned it and went in. There was Henriette, sitting on her bed and looking at me in tears. So I gently turned the key, and going up to her on tiptoe, I said: 'I forgot to ask you for something to read, Mademoiselle.' I will not tell you the book I read, but it is the most wonderful of romances, the most divine of poems. And when once I had turned the first page, she let me turn over as many leaves as I liked, and I got through so many chapters that our candles were quite burned out.

"Then, after thanking her, I was stealthily returning to my room, when a rough hand seized me, and a voice — it was Rivet's — whispered in my ear: 'So you have not yet quite settled that affair of Morin's?'

"At seven o'clock the next morning, she herself brought me a cup of chocolate. I have never drunk anything like it, soft, velvety, perfumed, delicious. I could scarcely take away my lips from the cup, and she had hardly left the room when Rivet came in. He seemed nervous and irritable like a man who had not slept, and he said to me crossly: 'If you go on like this, you will end by spoiling the affair of that pig of a Morin!'

"At eight o'clock the aunt arrived. Our discussion was very short, for they withdrew their complaint.

and I left five hundred francs for the poor of the town. They wanted to keep us for the day, and they arranged an excursion to go and see some ruins. Henriette made signs to me to stay, behind her uncle's' back, and I accepted, but Rivet was determined to go, and though I took him aside, and begged and prayed him to do this for me, he appeared quite exasperated and kept saying to me: 'I have had enough of that pig of a Morin's affair, do you hear?'

"Of course I was obliged to go also, and it was one of the hardest moments of my life. I could have gone on arranging that business as long as I lived, and when we were in the railway carriage, after shaking hands with her in silence, I said to Rivet: 'You are a mere brute!' And he replied: 'My dear fellow, you were beginning to excite me confoundedly.'

"On getting to the 'Fanal' office, I saw a crowd waiting for us, and as soon as they saw us, they all exclaimed: 'Well, have you settled the affair of that pig of a Morin?' All La Rochelle was excited about it, and Rivet, who had got over his ill humor on the journey, had great difficulty in keeping himself from laughing as he said: 'Yes, we have managed it, thanks to Labarbe.' And we went to Morin's.

"He was sitting in an easy-chair, with mustard plasters on his legs, and cold bandages on his head, nearly dead with misery. He was coughing with the short cough of a dying man, without anyone knowing how he had caught it, and his wife seemed like a tigress ready to eat him. As soon as he saw us he trembled so violently as to make his hands and

knees shake, so I said to him immediately: 'It is all settled, you dirty scamp, but don't do such a thing again.'

"He got up, choking, took my hands and kissed them as if they had belonged to a prince, cried, nearly fainted, embraced Rivet, and even kissed Madame Morin, who gave him such a push as to send him staggering back into his chair. But he never got over the blow: his mind had been too much upset. In all the country round, moreover, he was called nothing but that pig of a Morin, and the epithet went through him like a sword-thrust every time he heard it. When a street-boy called after him: 'Pig!' he turned his head instinctively. His friends also overwhelmed him with horrible jokes, and used to chaff him, whenever they were eating ham, by saying: 'It's a bit of you!' He died two years later.

"As for myself, when I was a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies in 1875, I called on the new notary at Foncerre, Monsieur Belloncle, to solicit his vote, and a tall, handsome, and evidently wealthy lady received me. 'You do not know me again?' she said.

"I stammered out: 'But—no, Madame.'

"'Henriette Bonnel?'

"'Ah!' And I felt myself turning pale, while she seemed perfectly at her ease, and looked at me with a smile.

"As soon as she had left me alone with her husband, he took both my hands, and squeezing them as if he meant to crush them, he said: 'I have been intending to go and see you for a long time, my

dear sir, for my wife has very often talked to me about you. I know under what painful circumstances you made her acquaintance, and I know also how perfectly you behaved, how full of delicacy, tact. and devotion you showed yourself in the affair—' He hesitated, and then said in a lower tone, as if he had been saying something low and coarse: 'In the affair of that pig of a Morin.'"